

"Caldochie" - A State of Mind?

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Abstract

The loyalist political majority in New Caledonia is a group which has been largely neglected by academics and the media. Collectively, this majority has been attributed the status of a distinct community under the title "Caldochie". "Caldochie"- a state of mind? examines the diverse ethnic and social groups who support New Caledonia's continued status as an Overseas Territory within the French Republic.

Chapter One discusses the various ethnic and social groups who support continued ties with France. Central to these groups are the *Caldoches*, inhabitants of European descent considered to be assimilated into the Territory. The presence of metropolitan French citizens in New Caledonia is also examined. As well as Europeans, other ethnic groups within New Caledonia also support French loyalism. Brief overviews are given of Melanesian, Polynesian and Asian loyalists along with their differing levels of involvement in loyalist party politics.

Chapter Two concentrates on loyalist party politics in New Caledonia, which have some distinctive features and form a political backdrop of great complexity. The politics of the largest loyalist party, the RPCR, are discussed. Attention is also given to the FN(NC) and the FC, the two principal parties of the extreme right, and extra-legal right-wing extremist groups collectively described as the *tentation ultra*.

The essay concludes by examining the validity of using the term "Caldochie" to describe New Caledonia's loyalists and concludes that this term is neither geographically, ethnically nor politically valid. Following the RPCR's signature of the 1988 Matignon Accords, mainstream loyalist support has been lent to the concept of a future New Caledonia in which both loyalists and indépendantistes might co-operate. Accordingly, the concept of an isolated loyalist community is no longer valid if indeed it ever was.

Abbreviations

ADRAF	Agence de Développement Rural et d'Aménagement Foncier.
AFC	Association Fraternité Calédonienne.
AFIKHM	Association pour la Fondation d'un Institut Kanak d'Histoire Moderne.
BIPA	Banque d'Information Politique et d'Actualité.
CACI	Comité d'Action Contre l'Indépendance.
CAP	Comité d'Action Patriotique.
CCAF	Comité de Crise pour l'Appui de la Calédonie Française.
CD	Calédonie Demain.
CFP	Cours de Franc Pacifique.
CORSO	Council of Organisations for Relief Services Overseas.
CRS	Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité.
DOM-TOM	Départments d'Outre-Mer; Territoires d'Outre-Mer.
EDS	Entente Démocratique et Sociale.
EPA	Ensemble Pour l'Avenir.
ETE	Ensemble Toutes Ethnies.
ETP	Entente Territoriale pour le Progrès.
FADIL	Fonds d'Aide pour le Développement des Iles et de l'Intérieur.
FC	Front Calédonienne.
FCL	Forces Calédoniennes Libres.
FI	Front Indépendantiste.
FLNKS	Front de Libération Nationale Kanake et Socialiste.
FN	Front National (Metropolitan French National Front).
FN(NC)	Front National (New Caledonian National Front).
FNSC	Fédération pour une Nouvelle Société Calédonienne.
FULK	Front Uni de Libération Kanake.
ITSEE	Institut Territorial de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques.
LKS	Libération Kanake Socialiste.
MLC	Mouvement Libéral Calédonien.
MJCF	Mouvement des Jeunes Canaques Français.
MOP	Mouvement pour l'Ordre et le Paix.
PC	Parti Communiste.
PFL	Paix, Fraternité, Liberté.
PNC	Parti National Calédonien.
PS	Parti Socialiste.
RC	Renouveau Calédonien.
ROC	Renouveau de l'opposition en Calédonie.
RPC	Rassemblement, Progrès et Coutume.
RPCR	Rassemblement Pour la Calédonie dans la République.
RPIMa	Regiment Parachutiste d'infanterie de Marine.
RPR	Rassemblement Pour la République.
RS	Républicains Socialistes.
RURALE	Ruraux Unis pour une Réforme Agraire Libérale et Equitable.
SLN	Société Le Nickel.
SMSP	Société Minière du Sud Pacifique.
UC	Union Calédonienne.
UDNC	Union Démocratique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
UMF	Uvea Mo Futuna.
UO	Union Océanienne.
VFVF	Vérité Fraternité, Vivre Français.

Introduction

Examinations of the New Caledonian political scene over recent years have tended to concentrate on the claims of the pro-independence FLNKS and the implications of those claims for the future of New Caledonia. Whether the vantage point of those outside observers offering commentary has been to the left or right wing, whether they have been francophone or anglophone, the centre of attention has been held by Melanesian claims to independence. Portrayals of the political majority, comprised predominantly of Europeans and non-European immigrants, who desire to continue close ties with France, have taken second place. Any mention of the political groups of the local Europeans, or *Caldoches* as they are known, has been a lower priority than the more newsworthy activities of the FLNKS.

Certainly, Television New Zealand has preferred to interview the late Jean-Marie Tjibaou rather than Jacques Lafleur, the leader of the loyalist RPCR. Similarly, representatives of the New Zealand Labour government since 1984 have concentrated their efforts on discussions with the FLNKS rather than on meeting leaders of the RPCR. Even Caldoche accounts of events in the 1980s have tended to look outwards at the *indépendantistes*, analysing them for better or worse, rather than at themselves.

This essay will examine the loyalist camp, or *Caldochie* as French journalists have come to describe it since the mid-1980s,¹ and will attempt to highlight its internal dynamics and its frequently ignored internal divisions. Chapter One presents an overview of the different social and ethnic groups within the loyalist camp who have voted against independence in the 1980s, and describes how they delineate themselves from one another. Chapter Two consists of a brief examination of loyalist party politics in the 1980s and contentious issues both within and outside the RPCR. The essay's conclusion considers whether the concept of "Caldochie" is a valid one.

Special mention should be made, at this stage, of the source material used in the following pages. Finding reliable source material on New Caledonia is generally not an easy task. Finding reliable sources on the topics outlined above is even less likely given the slant that many examinations of New Caledonia have involved. Commentary on New Caledonia frequently consists of outsiders' extreme reactions based more on the application of personal prejudices and preconceptions during visits to the Territory rather than on justifiable evidence. The mix of racial and political issues involved polarises thoughts to the extreme left and right. Marc Coulon and Thierry Desjardins are, respectively, good examples of these tendencies; they are prone to portraying their subjective realities at the expense of all others. Such journalists should be regarded more cautiously than more reliably informed Caldoche sources like Jacqueline Sénès, or academics such as John Connell or Miriam Dornoy. The Caldoches themselves are also

¹ For example *Le Monde* 10/6/89 p.14.

prone to making extreme remarks, particularly when questioned by metropolitan French reporters during periods of great political tension. Comments made by Caldoches during the 1984-1985 period, whether they be the anonymous inhabitants of villages like Koumac¹ or Jacques Lafleur himself² should be viewed as extreme reactions to trying circumstances rather than reflecting typical views. Unfortunately the latter are less likely to be found in the metropolitan French press because they are inherently less newsworthy. Herein lies the essential dilemma when dealing with much of the material available on New Caledonia: it tends to concentrate on extreme views or extreme circumstances. Attempts to draw general conclusions from such sources require a degree of caution and discrimination.

¹ Cf. Le Monde 2-3/12/84 p.9.

² Cf. ibid. 6-7/1/85 p.1.

Chapter One - loyalist diversity

Foreword: the demographic balance

Any discussion of the complex political scene in New Caledonia must of necessity mention the unique demographic composition of the Territory. Unlike its Australian and New Zealand neighbours, whose colonisation in the nineteenth century produced twentieth century populations overwhelmingly dominated by Europeans, in New Caledonia haphazard and sometimes abortive settlement schemes¹ only succeeded in creating a European population with a rough numerical parity to the local Melanesian population by the 1980s. Despite the desire of some Caldoche and metropolitan French conservatives for the late mayor of Nouméa Roger Laroque's *planter du blanc* solution to the lack of a clear European demographic majority,² such a majority has never been attained. In only two periods, circa 1901 and 1969, has the European population in New Caledonia exceeded 40% of the total population. Bernard Brou, a Caldoche historian, cites New Caledonia as "une colonie de peuplement qui ne se peuple pas" and characterises the rate of European settlement as "un développement excessivement lent, et même parfois rétrograde".³ In its 1983 census, the ITSEE estimated the total population of New Caledonia as 145,368. Of that number 53,974 (37.1%) were European and 61,870 (42.6%) were Melanesian. Non-European immigrants formed the remaining 29,524 inhabitants (20.3% of the population).⁴

Although by no means forming a demographic majority, the European population in New Caledonia is not as outnumbered by non-European inhabitants as the European population in South Africa. Some outsiders have mistakenly attempted to equate the political and demographic conditions in New Caledonia with those of the white-ruled minority régime in South Africa. CORSO erroneously describes French settlement as an "apartheid system"⁵, heedless of the fact that New Caledonia's ethnic divisions predate the legal invention of the South African apartheid system in the 1940s and are not embodied constitutionally as they are in South Africa. Neither homelands nor Bantustans exist in New Caledonia. Nor does electoral segregation. One of the salient features of New Caledonian political life since World War II has been the electoral consequences of the French Republic's decision to give Melanesians the vote

¹ See Jacqueline Sénès: La Vie Quotidienne en Nouvelle Calédonie de 1850 à nos jours p.143; John Connell: New Caledonia or Kanaky? pp.92-95.

² Op. cit. Le Monde 2-3/12/84 p.9.

³ Bernard Brou: Peuplement et population de la Nouvelle Calédonie: La société moderne pp.49, 50.

⁴ Alain Christnacht: La Nouvelle-Calédonie p.25.

⁵ CORSO: Kanaky: the Struggle for Independence in New Caledonia p.1.

in 1946. The Caldoche population in the post-war period has not felt so insecure that it has urged legislation to the same extremes as its Afrikaaner counterpart.

Another mistaken assumption, made especially by Australian and New Zealand journalists, is that ethnic divisions in New Caledonia rigorously match political divisions. The unspoken assumption behind many an article or videoclip has been that all Europeans are French loyalists and all Melanesians are indépendantistes. Such an approach in Television New Zealand's news footage of New Caledonia in the 1984-85 period favoured images of young FLNKS militants manning roadblocks, carrying shotguns, and throwing rocks at French gendarmes and riot police rather than the multiracial rallies of the RPCR against independence. The untidy truth is that political orientation in New Caledonia does not strictly follow racial lines. The most striking examples of this are the 1989 heads of the FLNKS and the RPCR. A Caldoche, François Burck, was made the FLNKS President in May 1989, while the RPCR has a Melanesian, Simon Loueckhote, as its chairman of the Territorial Congress.¹ Until 1987 Dick Ukeiwé, another Melanesian, was the RPCR's President. Any simple bipolar political grouping of loyalist Caldoches in one camp and indépendantiste Kanaks in the other obscures the differences that exist both inside and between these ethnic groups. It also tends to minimise or exclude altogether the presence of the 20.3% of New Caledonia's population who are neither Melanesian nor European.

Caldoche identity- internal and external distinctions

It is nonetheless true that the European portion of New Caledonia's population is central to the political groups who oppose independence and favour continued links with France. Their 37.1% of the population can be broken down into two important groups: the Caldoches (those born or assimilated into the local European community); and the *zozos* or *métros* (those metropolitan French citizens residing in New Caledonia for a short period, or those who have settled but have not been assimilated by the Caldoches). Both Caldoche and *métro* are terms with psychological connotations often puzzling to the outsider. Being considered Caldoche is as much a state of mind as the result of any residential qualification. It is for this reason that many *pièdes-noirs* who settled in New Caledonia after Algeria's independence found themselves easily accepted by the Caldoches, partly due to a shared colonial perspective. On the other hand, metropolitan French civil servants who have decided to stay on in New Caledonia and settle down have not always found the same easy acceptance, as Sénès points out:

Un *métro* adopté était un phénomène rare, mais c'était un homme heureux. Partie prenant du pays, il pouvait devenir Calédonien. A quel moment était-il reconnu enfant de l'île? A quels signes? Il est impossible de le préciser.²

As vague as any precise definition of what may or may not make a French citizen residing in New Caledonia "Caldoche" is the origin of the word itself. It is generally accepted that the term was not in widespread use prior to the early 1970s, and was only first popularly used at the time of the nickel boom of 1970 to 1972. Beyond that, opinions differ. Alain Saussol³ and Sénès⁴ see the word's adoption as an assertion of local European identity at a time when metropolitan French immigration was high due to local economic prosperity. They see a dichotomy between "Caldoche" and "métro". Jean Guiart and those who support the FLNKS tend to see "Caldoche" in another light. Guiart attributes the word's invention to the Melanesian wife of the UC leader Maurice Lenormand who, in the early years of Melanesian electoral involvement shortly after World War II, contracted the phrase *calédo-chose* to form a derogatory name describing those who used the word *Canaque* in the same manner:

¹ *Pacific Islands Monthly* July 1989 pp.24-25.

² Sénès p.234

³ Alain Saussol: *Trente milles <<Caldoches>> en Nouvelle Calédonie* p.129.

⁴ Sénès p.125.

Il [«Caldoche»] désigne les Calédoniens de souche européenne. Conçu comme une réplique mélanésienne à l'appellation de canaque...¹

Here "Caldoche" is seen as being opposed to "Canaque". It was supposedly adopted some two decades later by local Europeans with the same pride that local Melanesians claimed the derogatory word Canaque to identify themselves. The adoption of the term Caldoche was done so largely as a reaction to the outspoken opinions of the first modern Melanesian indépendantistes in the late 1960s. For Guiart, "Caldoche" represents the local European population's assertion of its own identity separate to that of local Melanesians rather than a mark of separateness from the metropolitan French. Either or both of these explanations may be correct; the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. René Brun offers another, less politicised, explanation of the origins of the term Caldoche:

Au début du siècle, une finale en «oche» était d'usage courant dans le langage familier [p.e. Alboche= Allemand]. Alors, pourquoi ne pas penser que caldoche (même époque, même formation) a été dit pour Calédonien..? ²

This explanation is more mundane than the previous two, but is more believable than Guiart's, if only because etymologists recognise it is generally unusual to be able to trace the origin of a colloquial term to one particular person. Brun's explanation is more plausible on linguistic grounds and is not a politically motivated description of the term's origins. The word Caldoche could have languished largely unused for over fifty years and could then have been revived either as a result of Melanesian political claims, the influx of metropolitan French during the nickel boom, or a combination of both factors.

Whichever explanation is correct, the first two arguments over the word's origin serve to furnish some initial insights into the salient points of Caldoche identity. The Caldoches are ostensibly French, yet they regard the metropolitan French as outsiders; they consider themselves New Caledonians yet they do not identify with the Melanesian inhabitants of the Territory. The majority of Caldoches somehow manage a mental reconciliation of these tensions, which in the political arena have resulted in both identification with and antipathy or hostility towards both the metropolitan French and Melanesian indépendantistes over different issues.

Despite their small numbers, it should not be imagined that the Caldoches are a totally homogenous group. Numbered variously at less than 30,000,³ around 30,000⁴ or over 33,000,⁵ precise statistics on how many Caldoches live in New Caledonia are difficult to obtain for the following reasons. Firstly, there is the question of those inhabitants of mixed race, the *métis*. No exact data is available on their numbers, and their status in relation to the Caldoches is a grey area. No official census criteria exist in New Caledonia for categorising *métis* separately and there was Kanak opposition to the 1983 census decision to class all *métis* as Caldoches rather than as Melanesians or Polynesians and so forth.⁶ Then there is the equally complicated question of the *métros*. As mentioned above, merely living in the Territory does not automatically mean a *méto* is regarded by the Caldoches as a member of their community. Also, within that community itself there exists a striking number of internal divisions through which the Caldoches differentiate themselves from one another. At the top of the Caldoche social hierarchy are the "Fifty Families", descendants of the earliest settlers who even today form a tight-knit group, not only through intermarriage, but through business dealings and financial links.⁷ Beneath this "old money" are a number of other social groups

¹ Jean Guiart in Le Monde 2-3/12/84 p.9.

² Ibid. 2-3/12/84 p.9.

³ Marc Coulon; L'irruption kanak de Calédonie à Kanaky p.70.

⁴ Saussol p.129.

⁵ Connell p.214.

⁶ Ibid. p.236.

⁷ Miriam Dornoy: Politics In New Caledonia p.60.

who, as in other former colonies such as Australia and New Zealand, have a level of social standing dependent on the length of time their families have been settled in New Caledonia, and on the social origins of their ancestors as Jean-Pierre Doumenge notes:

...l'ancienneté d'établissement crée... des solidarités internes (on est colons Bourbonnais, colons Feillet, descendants d'immigrés alsaciens-lorrains, descendants de déportés de la Commune, descendants de bagnards, arrivés dans l'entre-deux-guerres ou pendant le «boom» de 1967-1972). On se sent aussi «pieds-noirs» d'Afrique du Nord, Bretons, Italiens, Corses.¹

Doumenge also adds that métros are socially marginalised by the Caldoches mainly on the basis of their comparatively recent arrival. In such a young society, with a history that started only in the 1850s, the length of residence of a Caldoche family in New Caledonia has great social significance. Along with wealth, material possessions and most importantly (like the Melanesians) land,² it is a sign of legitimacy which assumes greater importance than in older, less insular European settler nations like the United States. The duration of Caldoche occupancy assumes paramount importance given the external pressures the Caldoches have faced since the 1960s; rising Melanesian land and independence claims; and the metropolitan French response to those claims which has resulted in seven different Territorial plans and statutes since 1976.* It implies assimilation into the Territory and its ways and a supposed depth of understanding of local affairs which are quite reasonably jealously guarded against what is regarded as the arbitrary *dirigisme* of successive metropolitan administrators. Sénès traces this strand of Caldoche sentiment back to the administration of Governor Feillet in the 1890s, after which:

L'opinion de ce petit pays sera absolument intraitable à l'égard du fonctionnaire doté d'une originalité trop aiguë ou d'un plan d'action trop autoritaire. En 1900 de M. le gouverneur Feillet, en 1940 de l'autoritaire amiral d'Argenlieu, en 1985 du solitaire Edgard Pisani, la Calédonie dite «des Caldoches» refusera absolument les diktats.³

The marks of this assimilation into the Territory are perhaps less evident than some Caldoches would wish. In his fondness for the image of Caldoche assimilation and authenticity, in 1980 Brou went so far as to use the term *européens indigènes* ⁴ when discussing the Caldoches and suggested a degree of assimilation into the local environment more imagined than real: "N'existe-t-il pas dans la brousse calédonienne, des Européens qui vivent «comme des indigènes»?"⁵ If such creatures do exist they form only a very small minority even amongst broussards for whom, as for an increasing number of Melanesians, it is more normal to wear European clothes, drive European cars and live in European housing. Nevertheless, the import of such claims and the Caldoche opposition to changes from different metropolitan administrations serve to underline the heartfelt sentiment that because the Caldoches live in New Caledonia they are therefore better adapted to understand local conditions than outsiders who should not be meddling in matters they cannot comprehend. Jean-Marie Colombani, who was born in Nouméa, believes that therein lies the key to any métro gaining acceptance and recognition in Caldoche society. It is necessary to accede to the Caldoche belief of their superiority on home ground:

¹ Jean-Pierre Doumenge: *Les Mélanésien et la société pluriethnique en Nouvelle-Calédonie* p.102.

² See Jean-Marie Colombani: *L'Utopie calédonienne* pp.113-114.

* Cf below pp.30-32.

³ Sénès p.165.

⁴ Brou p.21.

⁵ Ibid. p.31.

Le critère déterminant pour qu'un «zozo» soit classé «caldoche» n'est ni le lieu de naissance, ni le nombre d'années passées sur le territoire, mais une forme d'esprit qui consiste dans l'adoption sans réserve d'un certain nombre de postulats, dont le premier rejette l'ingérence de Paris dans les affaires locales.¹

This is the main reason for the Caldoches' dislike of métros. However conservative civil servants or even government heads may be, they do not necessarily accept that the Caldoches are better informed or equipped to deal with the administration of local problems. They view the Caldoches as having a provincial, sometimes racist outlook, and point to the dependent state of New Caledonia's economy as one reason why the Caldoches need metropolitan expertise.* They are not alone in this sentiment. Other metropolitan French have remarked on the Caldoches' lack of education and cultural refinement.² Such remarks are seldom very positive. For example, here is Guiart's summary of the importance of culture and a good education for the Caldoches:

La culture pour les européens [de la Nouvelle-Calédonie], c'est ce qu'on apprend au Lycée pour passer la Baccalauréat et que l'on s'empresse d'oublier par la suite.³

There is a large amount of metropolitan snobbery in this observation. It is conveniently forgotten that similar generalisations could equally be made about the metropolitan French, or any English-speaking country on the Pacific rim. The Caldoches themselves, whether or not they feel culturally inferior, certainly do not reveal any cultural cringe. Knowledge of their local environment is sufficient to make them feel intellectually secure. Jacques Lafleur's scorn for outside experts is typical:

Cela fait des années que chaque personne qui débarque à Nouméa a trouvé la solution en quarante-huit heures et compris tout de suite la coutume canaque!⁴

Whether Jacques Lafleur truly understands Kanak custom either is a moot point but he, as a Caldoche, implicitly regards himself as better qualified to comment on it and other local affairs than any Johnny-come-lately métro. Colombani refers to this sentiment as "le vieux réflexe «anti-zozo» selon lequel le Néo-Calédonien avait, dans le domaine des affaires locales, une qualification innée qu'un métropolitain, fût-il diplômé, ne pouvait acquérir qu'après un long séjour."⁵

The métros - inauthentic but necessary

While the Caldoches may distrust the métros and regard them as socially inferior, at the same time it is recognised their presence is necessary and their numbers are such that they cannot be totally ignored. The 1983 ITSEE census lists some 16,844 French inhabitants born outside New Caledonia, either Europeans from mainland France and former French colonies (95%) or from the Overseas Departments of Réunion, Guadeloupe and Martinique (5%).⁶ Of those French citizens originating from mainland France and former French colonies, by far the largest portion consists of métros. French citizens from former colonies like Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and from sub-Saharan Africa number only around 2,000 inhabitants.⁷ The métros perform diverse functions within New Caledonia as administrators, police, teachers, health workers or as military personnel. Connell boldly asserts that they have no long-term interest in staying in New Caledonia and are attracted to the Territory as a posting where

¹ Colombani p.25.

* Cf. below p.34.

² Claude Gabriel and Vincent Kermel: *La révolte kanake* p.58. Coulon pp.35, 59-60, 71.

³ Jean Guiart: *La terre est le sang des morts* p.290.

⁴ *Le Monde* 6-7/1/85 p.1.

⁵ Colombani p.53.

⁶ Ibid. p.28.

⁷ Op. cit. Connell p.216.

they can enjoy a sunny, relaxed Pacific lifestyle and the higher pay rates offered to those working outside mainland France. It is this supposed preoccupation with short-term material gain rather than any genuine interest in New Caledonia itself which has earned them the dislike of the Caldoches. Connell states that *zozo* is an abbreviation of *zoreilles*, a snipe at those whose ears prick up at the mention of the higher wages offered to workers in New Caledonia. Another nickname used for them is *cinq-cinqs*, "five point fivers", which according to Connell is a reference to those *métros* who constantly mentally convert Pacific francs back to metropolitan ones to ascertain what local prices are in "real money".¹

The *métros* may be singled out as different and foreign, but the role they play in the functioning of the Territory is indispensable and their presence is an electoral advantage for the Caldoches. The presence of approximately 14,000 non-Caldoche French amongst the 53,000 plus local Europeans (around 26% of their total in 1983) is widely regarded as being important during elections. *Métro* electors living in New Caledonia vote overwhelmingly in accordance with the loyalist RPCR:

Les fonctionnaires de Nouméa participent peu à la vie politique, du moins directement. Mais ils constituent une masse électorale dont l'intérêt coïncide avec l'immobilisme des autres groupes de la communauté européenne... Aussi votent-ils sans état d'âme pour le parti du *statu quo*, le RPCR, et s'insurgent-ils avec indignation contre la violence des Kanaks qui trouble leur séjour.²

Their eligibility to vote, along with that of Polynesian and other recent non-European immigrants,* has been disputed by the FLNKS. For the FLNKS these comparatively recent arrivals do not fulfil the party's "victims of history" definition. The FLNKS held in 1987 that electoral eligibility in New Caledonia should be confined to those citizens whose parents were born in the Territory.³ Prior to the 13 September 1987 Territorial self-determination referendum, the RPCR partially recognised the issues this argument raised by moving that voter eligibility should be restricted to those residing in the Territory for at least three years. As a result 12.5% of European voters were disqualified from the referendum, a sustainable loss given the FLNKS's boycott decision.⁴ On the basis of past elections in which the FLNKS had actively participated such as the 29 September 1985 Regional Elections, this loss was not of great importance. Even then 12.5% of the European electorate would not have been decisive given that those voters inhabited Nouméa and its environs.⁵ The RPCR received 70% of the vote there in September 1985.⁶

For the Caldoches, the presence of the *métros* is electorally indispensable. They swell RPCR voting numbers without embroiling themselves in local party politics as well as contributing essential services to the Territory's administration. Nor is it likely that the RPCR would ever lose *métro* support. If Connell is correct, it is not in their best interest to have their stays in New Caledonia upset by the changes claimed by indépendantistes and their uncertain implications for the CFP exchange rate, Nouméa's sunny lifestyle and their high rates of pay.

The *métros* themselves are more aware of their special status and its complexities than the Caldoches are. For Paris-based administrators previously sent to other provincial postings, either in France's other DOM-TOM or even within continental France's outlying regions, much of what they experience would not be new. *Métros* are half a world away from home, living on a French tropical island, yet find

¹ Connell pp.219-220.

² Jean-Paul Besset: Le dossier calédonien p.48.

* Cf. below p.23.

³ Alan Clark: Constitutional Dynamic, Political Risk: Self-Determination in New Caledonia, 1986-1987 p.12.

⁴ Le Monde 16/9/87 p.9.

⁵ 66% of all immigrants live in and around Nouméa. See Connell p.219.

⁶ Clark: Conflict Formal and Informal: Elections in New Caledonia 1984-1986 p.102.

themselves regarded as outsiders by the local European inhabitants. Living and working in Nouméa, they are materially comfortable, yet find the town lacking in the galleries, music and nightlife they enjoyed in Paris and other larger metropolitan centres. There are those *métros* who also find the Caldoches rather provincial. The following graffiti were in 1989 to be found on the wall of a fashionable shopping mall in Nouméa's Quartier Latin :

C'est pas cool, Nouméa

Babas

Ringards

Vite - fait que le choléra revienne

Skinhead de Paris 6e RPIMa

Thus at least one soldier posted to New Caledonia has expressed his disgust for Nouméa and its inhabitants. How widely such views are held within military enlisted circles is hard to judge, but such *cafard* is a traditional problem for troops stationed thousands of kilometres away from home.

The issue of prior occupancy

The Caldoches have an easier task asserting their length of residence as a mark of social and political ascendancy over *métros* in local affairs than they do when faced by the undeniable Melanesian claim to prior occupancy of New Caledonia. The Caldoche attitude to *métro* newcomers is morally shaken by the realisation that they too are comparative newcomers in relation to the local Melanesian inhabitants of New Caledonia. The mystery surrounding the precise origins of the Lapita potmakers, the original settlers of New Caledonia some 4,000 years ago,¹ has allowed the occasional Caldoche amateur ethnographer and conservative metropolitan French writer to reduce the Melanesians to the status of merely being a wave of invaders. According to this argument, although having arrived earlier than the French, Melanesians can in no way claim moral ascendancy over French settlers because the Melanesians too must have disrupted or destroyed an even earlier culture. Those Caldoches who hold such views see it as only natural that just as the Melanesians displaced some previous culture in a Darwinist struggle of the fittest, so too the French have that right. Lands distributed to colonists under the French colonial administration are considered to have more validity than pre-colonial Melanesian land boundaries. Here is Yves Devillelongue, the man who Jean-Marie Tjibaou replaced as Mayor of Hienghène in 1977:

Cette histoire de premier occupant ne tient pas debout. Si on s'amuse à chercher dans chaque pays qui était là le premier, on n'a pas fini de déménager. D'ailleurs, les Canaques eux-mêmes ont été précédés par d'autres zoulous. Il y a 4,000 ans...²

M. Devillelongue's reference to Zulus is no doubt based less on any hard archaeological evidence than on his own cultural assumption that one sort of native is much the same as another. The implication here is that even if the Caldoches were not the original occupants of New Caledonia, it is now too late to contemplate restoring the old status quo. One might as well attempt to give France back to the Gauls. It is a view that conveniently reinforces the current status quo and simultaneously undermines Melanesian legitimacy.

Conjectures on the true identity of the settlers in New Caledonia prior to the Melanesian "invasion" vary. Some conservatives like Eric Agostini keep their speculations suggestively vague, lest history prove them wrong: "il semble bien qu'il y

¹ Connell p.1.

² Op. cit. Lionel Duroy: *Hienghène, le désespoir calédonien* pp.180-181.

ait eu avant l'emprise mélanésienne une civilisation antérieure (et de race blanche selon certains)."¹

Others speculate with an aplomb that might even make Erik von Däniken blench. Of these amateur Caldoche ethnographers, the *palmes académiques* must be awarded to Roger Ludeau for his claim that "les authentiques premiers occupants de ce Territoire" were members of a hybrid Mayan-Uighur civilisation.² How Central American Indians and a Central Asian nomadic people managed to cosettle a remote South Pacific island around 2000BC is uncertain, but such unsubstantiated claims are doubtless motivated more by the desire to construct a moral case against the legitimacy of Melanesian land claims in the 1980s than by academically sound concerns for local ethnography.

Similar fairytales have arisen in New Zealand to counter Maori legitimacy. The Moriori are another race of supposed original occupants who were a staple of New Zealand historical myth for many decades. Rather than being considered as the original occupants of the Chatham Islands, it was popularly held that they were the original occupants of mainland New Zealand and were displaced by Maori "invaders".³ In April 1989, a Wellington-based group was criticised by the Race Relations Conciliator for printing a pamphlet which described a mysterious race of "white Maoris" as New Zealand's first occupants. Such quests into the origins of original occupants, both in New Zealand and New Caledonia, are indicators of both Caldoche and Pakeha insecurity. In New Caledonia, where the European population does not enjoy the numerical predominance of its New Zealand counterpart, that insecurity is much more pronounced and manifests itself in more forceful forms than mere pamphleteering by members of the extreme right. In May 1988 it was claimed by Le Point that there were some 300 armed Caldoche militiamen in Nouméa.⁴

The broussards - the people of the land?

The sector of Caldoche society which feels the most insecure and encroached upon are the broussards, those who live up country from Nouméa in villages or on farms. The broussards play a central role in the Caldoche mystique: they are the last of the pioneers, descendants of the rugged families who cleared away virgin bush to make way for the civilising effects of European agriculture on the untamed landscape; a noble breed whose very mention invokes epithets like "the salt of the earth" or "l'air d'une brute au cœur tendre" as Desjardins would say.⁵ The stock image is of a bronzed outdoorsman (or woman in Desjardins' case⁶) astride a horse herding cattle in a cloud of dust. This image is as central to the Caldoche sense of identity as the Australian stockman is to Australians, or the high country sheep farmer is to New Zealanders. As with its Australian and New Zealand counterparts, it is an image that has faded in importance since World War II but still rings true for those Caldoches who grew up in the interwar period.

As in Australia and New Zealand, this cultural accent on the Territory's rural heritage masks the true weight of rural inhabitants in demographic, economic, social and political terms. The most important element of New Caledonia's internal migration since the 1960s has been the movement of broussards away from the rural areas of the west and east coasts to Nouméa.⁷ By the time of the 1983 ITSEE census, 31,945 (59%) of New Caledonia's 53,974 Europeans were living in the commune of Nouméa.

¹ Eric Agostini: Le Mélanésien et le droit p.81.

² Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 29/2/84 op. cit. AFC: Nouvelle-Calédonie: combat pour les droits de l'homme 1981-1984 p.110. Ludeau is the head of the Association des amis des Etats-Unis. See Le Monde 9/3/85 p.6.

³ See Michael King: Moriori: A People Rediscovered.

⁴ Le Point 23/5/88 p.34.

⁵ Desjardins p.43.

⁶ Ibid. pp.48-49.

⁷ Connell p.232.

The remaining 22,000 were distributed along the east and west coasts of the Grande Terre, over 18,100 of whom lived on the west coast.¹ Of New Caledonia's European inhabitants, perhaps only 500 families are still employed solely in agriculture. The 1983 ITSEE census lists 227 male and 23 female cattle ranchers, and 204 male and 41 female farmers, an unspecified number of whom were métis.² Commercial agriculture, largely the domain of Caldoche farmers due to the Melanesian tendency for subsistence agriculture, has diminished at a rapid rate, falling from 10% of the Territory's GNP in 1965 to only 2% by 1985.³ Guiart stresses that the most important broussard economic activities are now based on commerce and services rather than on agriculture. Even Bourail, the second largest Caldoche centre outside Nouméa after Dumbéa, is no longer the agricultural centre it once was.⁴ Saussol sees fit to list those who work solely as cattle-farmers last in his summary of broussard social categories:

La brousse inclut trois catégories de citoyens calédoniens - les citadins des bourgs importants (La Foa, Bourail, Koné, Koumac, Poindimié, Cités minières - Houaïlou, Thio et Népoui); les petits colons (fils de colons dans le commerce ou l'artisanat ou l'administration); et les éleveurs.⁵

Of the éleveurs it is important to distinguish between the "landed gentry" of the Fifty Families with their large runholdings and the *petits blancs* with their small, often uneconomic farms. It is the latter who have been hardest hit by New Caledonia's agricultural decline since the 1960s. Astute broussard families avoided this downturn by investing in mining. In the case of the Lafleurs, this occurred as early as the 1930s.⁶ At the time of the nickel boom in the late 1960s there were some 110 *petits mineurs*. This small group profited from the increased demand in nickel either by competing on the buoyant nickel market, or by selling their mining operations to the SLN.⁷ The nickel boom drew the interest of investors away from agriculture. By the 1980s mining comprised 90% of New Caledonia's exports.⁸ The New Caledonian mining industry had been monopolised by the SLN to the extent that only four petit mineur companies survived: Jacques Lafleur's SMSP, Ballande, Pentecost and the SNN.⁹

The *petits blancs* were the section of broussard society which had neither the capital nor the versatility to take advantage of the nickel boom. Connell describes them as the New Caledonian social group least capable of adapting to economic change; "the real Caldoches who can rarely conceive of a future outside their own humble agricultural existence, oriented to a few hectares of poor land and a few cattle, supplemented by employment (perhaps seasonally), and hunting and fishing".¹⁰ This picture is radically different from the one held by metropolitan Frenchman of New Caledonian rural life. As Jean-Charles Moglia, an FN(NC) supporter from Bourail cynically commented in 1988:

En France, tout le monde croit que nous [les broussards] sommes riches, racistes, et que nous exploitons les Mélanésiens. C'est stupide. Nous sommes des fauchés. Nous travaillons seuls.¹¹

Sons of broussard farmers have increasingly been forced to look beyond the confines of the family farm for employment, seeking jobs either in Nouméa, or in the provincial centres. The result has been a decline in the broussard population since the

¹ Connell p.222.

² Ibid. p.141.

³ Ibid. p.142.

⁴ Ibid. p.222; Guiart p.235.

⁵ Saussol p.138.

⁶ *Le Point* 19/12/88 p.83.

⁷ Connell p.132.

⁸ Ibid. p.133.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.141.

¹¹ *Le Monde* 4/11/88 p.9.

1960s. The average age of the rural population has increased. It has become increasingly common for only one son to remain behind on the farm to help his parents. A similar but less pronounced urban drift amongst Melanesians since the 1960s resulted in 68% of New Caledonia's agricultural workforce being over 50 years of age by 1984.¹

Such changes have been destabilising influences on the strong family ties of the *colons agricoles*, with their emphasis on the strength of the family pitted against the natural environment, and a belief (like the Melanesians) in patriarchal control and group activity as opposed to individuality.² Guiart has noted high levels of broussard alcoholism, particularly amongst the *petits blancs* of Poum, Koumac and Ouégoa in the north of the Grande Terre, those settlements most distant from Nouméa.³ These *petits blancs*, considered socially inferior by most Caldoches and also by many Melanesians, include *métis* and the descendants of convicts from nineteenth century penal colonies. Their education is considered substandard even in Caldoche terms, and their numbers include illiterates, while their world view seldom exceeds the confines of their valley. What hopes they have for the future, with or without political change, remain grim.

For all their importance in the Caldoche psyche, it is the broussards who have felt themselves the most misunderstood and ignored sector of Caldoche society during the political events of recent years. Broussards were those most exposed to FLNKS militancy between 1984 and 1985. Materially, broussard inhabitants on the east coast of the Grande Terre suffered worst. Centres like Hienghène and Thio were the hardest hit by arson and bombings between November 1984 and February 1985. Hienghène experienced 370.5 million CFP, and Thio 401 million CFP, in property damage. By way of comparison, Nouméa suffered only 2.8 million CFP in property damage over the same period.⁴ Such destruction of property, the erection of FLNKS roadblocks and Eloi Machoro's occupation of the mining town of Thio prompted over 2,000 "refugees" to shift to Nouméa. They were rehoused in the vacant tower blocks of the Nouméan suburb of Saint Quentin by the French authorities.⁵ In Hienghène alone, 294 broussards were evacuated between 4-6 December 1984.⁶ Exactly how many have returned subsequently is unclear, but the east coast in particular suffered a permanent loss in European inhabitants. By 1988, Jean-Claude Besset described it as "totalement désertée par les Européens".⁷

Broussards also feel they have suffered economic misfortune as a direct consequence of being deserted and neglected by the Nouméa-centered Territorial administration, and are disdainful of "weekend farmers" or Caldoche absentee landlords, of whom the largest individual landholder is Jacques Lafleur.⁸ The broussards have some cause for resentment as they, like the Melanesians, also suffer from the land distribution situation. By 1988, less than 8% of New Caledonia's landowners still owned 75% of the land and the broussards see such people ("les grandes familles de Nouméa") as not being sufficiently tied to the land they own.⁹ Both outside observers and the Caldoches themselves have pointed out this animosity that broussards feel for their comparatively affluent Nouméan fellows. Jean-Claude Guillebaud wrote from Bourail in 1980:

¹ Connell pp. 238; 140.

² Duroy pp.187-188.

³ Guiart p.277; cf. *Le Point* 28/8/89 p.35.

⁴ Connell p.343.

⁵ Ibid. p.344.

⁶ Duroy p.249.

⁷ Besset p.37.

⁸ Connell p.136.

⁹ Besset p.37.

Partout, j'entendrai ainsi les colons, petits ou moyens, pester contre les grands domaines mal cultivés par quelques richissimes habitants de Nouméa. Ballande, Pentecost, Lafleur... Des gens d'une autre race. Sans vrais liens avec la terre.¹

Once again, occupation of land and assimilation to it are the crux of social differentiation. Just as the typical Nouméan Caldoche feels himself or herself a cut above zozos, whose metropolitan backgrounds render them unqualified to pass appropriate judgements on local affairs, so too the broussard is distrustful of Nouméans. They are stereotyped as being soft, shallow, materialistic and corrupted by urban living. They are characterised as inauthentic Caldoches, only weekend farmers at best, who have turned their backs on the pioneer ethic of their ancestors. The comment one anonymous inhabitant of Koumac made to Le Monde summarises this sentiment neatly: "pendant que nous moisissons ici, en brousse, ils [les habitants de Nouméa] se baignent et se dorent au soleil sur les plages."²

The marked broussard animosity felt towards Nouméans which Guillebaud noticed in 1980 has intensified during the last decade. The most outstanding broussard in his detestation of the "old boy" system of the Nouméan *copains*³ is M. Justin Guillemard, the Mayor of Bourail, described as the "porte-parole des broussards".⁴ Guillemard was expelled from the RPCR in 1987, ostensibly for his outspokenness in rejecting the RPCR's proposal of a three year residential qualification for voter eligibility in the September 1987 self-determination referendum. Guillemard went so far as to attack "les affairistes de Nouméa" in front of the Territorial Congress.⁵ He despises self-centered big business interests for their lack of concern over "les petits" of the bush, blaming them for the economic neglect of broussards:

Ces gens-là sont aveuglés par leurs affaires. Moi, je ne defends pas les gros, je defends les petits, en particulier tous les broussards qui se sont réfugiés à Nouméa en 1984 et 1985 et qui vivent dans les conditions misérables...de Saint Quentin.⁶

The increased pressure of Melanesian land claims was compounded, in the minds of broussards, by the overseeing presence of the socialist Mitterrand government from 1981 to 1986. It was commonly assumed that the Mitterrand administration's sympathies lay with Melanesian indépendantistes - "un gouvernement qui se met en quatre pour leur être agréable".⁷ Broussards even sought to place the entire blame for New Caledonia's ethnic divisions on the PS government, being reluctant to look closer to home for the causes. The following statement was made in 1984 by a broussard foreman at Thio:

Et puis, nous ne sommes pas contre eux [les Mélanésiens]. C'est le gouvernement qui a menti à tout le monde. C'est maintenant à lui de nous tirer de là.⁸

His message was that there is no problem in the bush, only in a Paris government which had led everyone astray. The PS government was a convenient scapegoat for many Caldoches between 1981 and 1986. It was accused of being either communist or "de forte inspiration marxiste"⁹ partly as a result of having four PC ministers. The Caldoches, and in particular the broussards, felt betrayed in 1984 during the FLNKS's disruption of the November Territorial Assembly Elections when it became clear that the government gendarmes and CRS were not necessarily present merely to act as Caldoche bodyguards. At Bourail on 26 December 1984, local

¹ Jean-Claude Guillebaud: Un voyage en Océanie p.125.

² Le Monde 2-3/12/84 p.9.

³ J. Guillemard in Le Monde 12/9/87 p.8.

⁴ Ibid. 28/5/87 p.10.

⁵ Ibid. 7-8/6/87 p.6.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bernard Sylvano and René Renneteau: Une Epine dans le Caillou p.14.

⁸ Le Monde 29/11/84 p.12.

⁹ Sylvano and Renneteau p.14.

broussards were reportedly shocked when gendarmes were ordered to clear their two roadblocks as well as FLNKS ones. There was a bitter sense of treason; that both parties were French and that the gendarmes should be controlling the FLNKS and not broussard lawlessness. One young woman present at the scene cried out: "On vous a même offert une bouteille de champagne pour le réveillon et aujourd'hui vous nous trahissez!"¹ At that time Jacques Lafleur began talking of the Caldoche community's need to defend itself: "La Nouvelle-Calédonie doit se trouver aujourd'hui en état de légitime défense."² The implication was that the PS government could not be trusted to do this.

The phrase *légitime défense* was to have an ugly echo in the case of the ambush of ten FLNKS members at Hienghène on 5 December 1984. The defense of the Lapetite family and their accomplices centered on a plea of self-defence. It was argued that because Hienghène's gendarmes had been disarmed on 21 November 1984 under the orders of Colonel Marchasson, the commander of the gendarmerie, they were unable to maintain law and order.³ When unidentified FLNKS militants began burning down houses at night around Hienghène, these gendarmes were accused of inactivity and even of sympathy with the FLNKS. Marie-José Vanhalle, a Hienghène RPCR representative, said of the gendarmerie that "j'avais l'impression qu'ils étaient d'accord avec Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Ils laissaient faire. Ils faisaient exprès."⁴ Cut off, and in the absence by default of representatives of French Republican law and order, the inhabitants of Hienghène decided to take matters into their own hands. Hienghène's Post Office was turned into a guardhouse for the local *milice d'autodéfense*,⁵ with ten rifles and three thousand rounds of ammunition stockpiled there.⁶ The ambush of FLNKS members by the Lapetites with Maurice Mitride was reportedly provoked by the arson of Odette Mitride's house. The jury which acquitted them on 29 September 1987 believed they were justified in ambushing the ten Melanesians, thought by the Lapetites to be responsible for this and other acts of arson.⁷ This was also the belief of Marie-José Vanhalle, although it was never proven that the ten dead men were involved in acts of arson: "J'estime que leur réaction [celle des Lapetite], certes violent, est un acte de légitime défense."⁸

Broussard intransigence and their willingness to reach for a gun is another stereotypical aspect of their personalities - a Wild West approach where the law comes from a pointed gun barrel. In the past, broussards have had no hesitations over clandestine political activity against any group regarded as a threat, whether it be their descent on Nouméa in 1940 against the authoritarian Admiral d'Argenlieu, or in 1958 their similar abduction of ten UC Territorial Assembly members who were illegally imprisoned at Bourail.⁹ This willingness to resort to force is no longer as powerful as it once was, if only because of the broussards' falling numbers. The days when an armed broussard militia could descend on Nouméa and deliver a violent coup are over:

Il n'y a plus assez de colons vivants de la terre pour constituer une masse armée efficace. Ceux qui survivent sont pour la plupart âgés de plus de soixante ans, et ne peuvent rallier autour d'eux qu'un petit nombre de jeunes hommes restés à la maison...¹⁰

¹ *Le Monde* 27/12/84 p.6.

² *Ibid.* p.1.

³ Duroy p.226.

⁴ *Ibid.* p.246.

⁵ The Lapetites were not involved in this militia. See *Ibid.* p.238.

⁶ *Ibid.* p.241.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.238; *BIPA* White File 29/9/87.

⁸ Duroy p.272.

⁹ Connell p.249.

¹⁰ Guiart pp.249-250.

If the number of "refugees" who moved to Nouméa during the 1984-85 period is taken as an indicator, the broussard capacity to resist has generally weakened.* Others had already left their lands prior to that confrontational period. Many broussards took advantage of land reforms to sell off some or all of their land at a profit and retire to Nouméa, particularly after the 1978 Dijoud Plan when Caldoche offers of land sales exceeded FADIL's budgeted purchasing power.¹

There are those broussards though, particularly those over fifty years of age, whose resolve to retain firm ownership of their land has not weakened. M. Florendo Paladini for example, who in the mid-1980s had the following message written on a sign outside his farm at Ouano:

PROPRIÉTÉ PRIVÉE. DÉFENSE ABSOLUE DE CIRCULER HORS DE LA
ROUTE, DE CHASSER, TOUCHER, COUPER, PRENDRE QUOI QUE CE SOIT
SOUS PEINE DES TRIBUNAUX ²

The above may be an extreme case of possessiveness, but illustrates just how jealously certain broussards watch over their land. Advancing age and expanding land reforms can weaken this resolve, but on occasions the two factors combine and result in a hardening of resolve, particularly during troublesome times like the 1984-85 period of unrest. A septuagenarian talking to Jacques Lafleur during a 1985 visit to the Vallée des Arabes ably demonstrates this: "On laisse faire les terroristes du FLNKS! Si j'étais plus jeune, crois-moi Jacques, j'en aurai déjà envoyé plus d'un les quatre pattes en l'air!"³ Fear as well as possessiveness is the cause of such verbal aggressiveness. The broussards' fear of Melanesians stems directly from the 1878 and 1917 rebellions and the resulting massacres of isolated colon families living in the bush. The fear still exists that it might happen again some time, a feeling aggravated by the tension over independence in the mid-1980s. It is believed that the Kanaks have not changed their ways since the days of past rebellions. According to M. Yves Devillelongue:[†] "En 1917 ils [les Kanaks] mangeaient encore du Blanc." Another Hienghène local, Henri Garnier, added: "Ils ne changeront jamais."⁴

It is for this reason amongst others that broussard paranoia was so widespread in 1984 and 1985. There was a very real fear that another 1878- or 1917-style Melanesian uprising was about to occur. Le Monde caught this mood and the siege mentality it invoked in an article on the inhabitants of the northern centre of Koumac, where broussards barricaded themselves in and set up guards to wait for the worst. One of those guards described how he saw the Melanesians: "Vous ne les connaissez pas, monsieur, ils sont capables de venir à la nuit et de nous massacrer pendant notre sommeil. Ce sont des lâches."⁵

This may or may not have been correct, but the broussards themselves believed so, partly because they were brought up to think such things. The reporter present was observant enough to realise that much of the adult fear he witnessed was born out of childhood bogeyman stories. He overheard a mother saying to her restless baby: "Si tu pleures, les Canaques viendront te chercher."⁶ How much fear and racism have resulted from such remarks over the years? It is unfortunate such things are not statistically quantifiable.

Despite their attitudes being affected almost from birth by tales of past rebellions and massacres, the broussards feel they know "their" Kanaks with the same assurance that an Afrikaner feels he knows "his" blacks. Broussards freely mix racism with

* See above p.12.

¹ Colombani p.20.

² Le Monde 9/3/85 p.6.

³ Le Nouvel Observateur 27/9/85 p.26.

[†] Cf. above p.9.

⁴ Duroy p.224.

⁵ Le Monde 2-3/12/84 p.1.

⁶ Ibid.

varying amounts of paternalism when talking about Melanesians. They are viewed as uppity children, but basically goodhearted ones, who are susceptible to bad outside influences and do not know their place. Philippe Marlier, an FN(NC) organiser and shopkeeper from Koné who had his business burnt down on 30 October 1984 claimed that "le Canaque est un petit gosse; on lui donne un bonbon, il en veut un deuxième."¹ On 16 December 1984, the arson of a shop in Bourail left three people dead including one gendarme.² Some days later Tonton Pierrot, a cattle rancher from Bourail concluded that the Kanaks were "pas mauvais du tout" and attributed their behaviour to too much alcohol; "c'est la bouteille qui les perd". Another bad influence was assumed by Tonton Pierrot to be the "curés défroqués" who fill the Melanesians' heads with talk of independence. His nephew, Joël, respected Melanesians too, but only so long as they knew their place: "le Kanak, le Mélando, c'est un bon mec quand il reste dans son coin."³

Any movement out of his "corner" is regarded as an intrusion, in particular where Melanesian land claims are concerned. Joël Pierrot advocated "la terre à ceux qui la travaillent", the underlying implication being that it is the Caldoches who do so. But there are broussards who do accept the need for a change in this attitude, having realised that their continued wellbeing depends on good relations with their Melanesian neighbours. Roger Menesson, in his sixties, is a Gaullist landowner from Pouembout:

On ne va tout de même pas mettre 45,000 Kanaks en prison. Il faut leur reconnaître une identité. 90% des blancs sont prêts à voter une indépendance calédonienne. Le territoire va devenir un pays... Il faudra bien se mettre un jour autour d'une table avec les Kanaks.⁴

Menesson's belief that 90% of the European population were ready for independence was not vindicated in the September 1987 self-determination referendum, but the need for dialogue with Melanesian indépendantistes following the events of 1984-85 was eventually recognised by Jacques Lafleur and resulted in the 1988 Matignon Accords. Whether they will lead to independence is unknown at this stage, and whether any real dialogue between broussards and Melanesians on a daily basis will become more widespread is also uncertain. Roger Menesson, having tried, admits that it is not easy. His example is far from being universal: "Moi, les Kanaks, je les cotoie depuis cinquante ans. J'ai dormi dans toutes les tribus avoisinantes et pourtant je ne peux pas dire que je les connais."⁵

Most broussards prefer to rest on their prejudices, claiming to know the ways of the Melanesians, while really knowing very little. As Guiart says:

Chaque colon de brousse affirmera bien connaître les noirs, les aimer même, être bien vu d'eux. Mais il pourra vivre toute sa vie auprès d'une concubine mélanésienne sans connaître des événements au village de sa campagne, parce qu'il n' imagine pas qu'il puisse s'y passer quelque chose d'intéressant...⁶

Melanesian loyalists

The broussards are not the only Europeans with unclear perceptions of the Melanesian tribes of New Caledonia. As was indicated earlier in this essay,* outside commentators on New Caledonia also impose their preconceived notions on the local Melanesians. The simple bipolar image of "Melanesian separatists" facing "European

¹ Le Monde 4/5/88 p.44.

² BIPA: Chronology (White File) 16/12/84.

³ Le Nouvel Observateur 21/12/84 p.29.

⁴ Ibid. 27/9/85 p.27.

⁵ Le Point 14/9/87 p.34.

⁶ Guiart p.127.

* See above p.1.

loyalists" is either spread without question by the press,¹ or actively encouraged due to the ideological outlook of certain groups.² The result is that Melanesian loyalists are disqualified by omission along with that much rarer breed; European indépendantistes. Claude Gabriel and Vincent Kermel number those Caldoches who vote for the FLNKS at approximately 1,500, with perhaps fifty actively involved in the party.³ The most common error resulting from this bipolar image is the consequent assumption that the FLNKS speaks on behalf of the entire Melanesian population when it cannot even claim to represent all Melanesian indépendantistes. Nidoïsh Naisseline's LKS has never been a part of the FLNKS. Yann Céléné Uregei's FULK was "excluded de facto from the FLNKS" in May 1989 following its decision to boycott the 11 June 1989 Provincial Elections. This incident was merely part of a wider rift over the FLNKS's signature of the Matignon Accords in June 1988, which FULK refused to sign.⁴

Regardless of such internal differences, there are still those who cling to the image of Melanesian unity. Speaking in Nouméa on May 4 1989 after the murder of the FLNKS President Jean-Marie Tjibaou by Djoubelly Wéa, the French Prime Minister Michel Rocard glossed over the very cause of Tjibaou's death: divisions within Kanak pro-independence circles over Tjibaou's signature of the Matignon Accords on 26 June 1988.⁵ FULK's refusal to sign the Accords was a symbol of its reluctance to accept Tjibaou's leadership. When that portion of the Melanesian community which votes for the RPCR and has never regarded Jean-Marie Tjibaou as its leader is also considered, it is clear that the "Kanak community" should not be supposed to be a politically united group. Only in 1989 did the Australasian press become aware of that fact regarding Kanak indépendantistes.⁶ Australasian reporters remain less conscious of the presence of Melanesian loyalists who do not desire independence but prefer continued close ties with France. It is this often ignored group which will receive attention here.

Melanesian loyalists are an ill-defined, contentious group within New Caledonian politics whose numbers vary according to the political stance of those describing them. In 1985, Doumenge boldly asserted that "Un tiers des autochtones semblent (...) ne pas adhérer aux thèses du FLNKS."⁷ This percentage would include Melanesian loyalists, supporters of minority independence groups such as the LKS and those Melanesians who abstain from voting in elections. Whilst being plausible, Doumenge's figure of one third appears too neat and tidy to be based on sound statistics. Also, the number of Melanesians who differed from the "theses of the FLNKS" as a result of French patriotism rather than indépendantiste factionalism was not stated. For a staunch French republican like Patrick Paitel "la fierté de la plupart des Kanaks calédoniens à conserver la nationalité française"⁸ is unquestionable, as is the belief that only "deux ou trois pour cent de Calédoniens mélanésiens fassent croire que la solution est socialiste et passe par l'indépendance."⁹ For Gabriel and Kermel, men of the French extreme left, the exact opposite is the truth: the RPCR Senator Dick Ukeiwé is merely a token "Kanak de service"¹⁰ through whom the RPCR, "un parti «blanc»",¹¹ is attempting to modify its image to give metropolitan France "une fausse vision de la réalité coloniale française en Nouvelle-Calédonie et en la mystifiant sur l'existence d'un courant de bons Kanaks favorables au maintien du *statu quo*."¹² For Paitel then, loyalist Melanesians form a majority while for Gabriel and Kermel they are merely a

¹ E.g. Christchurch Star 12/6/89 p.6.

² E.g. CORSO p.1.

³ Gabriel and Kermel p.60.

⁴ The Press 13/5/89 p.12.

⁵ See NZ Listener 17/6/89 p.12.

⁶ E.g. The Press: Kanak factionalism worsens 13/5/89 p.12; The Dominion Sunday Times 14/5/89.

⁷ Doumenge: Les Mélanésiens et la société plurethnique en Nouvelle-Calédonie p.84.

⁸ Patrick Paitel: L'enjeu kanak p.300.

⁹ Ibid. p.295.

¹⁰ Gabriel and Kermel p.208.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid. p.211.

hoax invented by the RPCR. Such opinions should be regarded sceptically. Paitel inflates the importance of Melanesian loyalists merely to undermine the FLNKS's claim to electoral legitimacy, while Gabriel and Kermel desire to deflate the numbers and significance of Melanesian loyalists in order to undermine the RPCR's claim to being a multiracial party.

For reliable information on the numbers of loyalist Melanesians, electoral results are more useful than such slanted opinions, but have their own inherent drawbacks. Electoral results do not offer breakdowns of voting according to ethnic group, except by default in communes like Maré, Lifou, and Ouvéa in the Loyalty Islands where 97% of the population is Melanesian, and on the Isle of Pines where 92% of the population is also Melanesian.¹ Electoral results for these communes serve only as rough indications of levels of Melanesian support for loyalist parties. FLNKS boycotts and Melanesian abstentions undermine the accuracy of election results as indicators of Melanesian political sympathies. Those who abstain may not do so out of personal support for the FLNKS. FLNKS barricades and clan pressures can be just as persuasive in convincing Melanesians not to vote.

In the November 1984 Territorial Elections, actively opposed by the FLNKS, support for the RPCR in the Loyalty Islands ranged from 8% (418 votes) on Lifou, Dick Ukeiwé's home island, through 10.9% (198 votes) on Ouvéa, to 13% (402 votes) on Maré. Maré was the only island where an indépendantiste party gained significant support. Naisseline's LKS gained 30.3% of the vote there (928 votes). The abstention rate was 90.1% on Lifou, 84.9% on Ouvéa, and 55.9% on Maré. On the Isle of Pines, the Melanesian loyalist vote totalled 19.4% of the electorate, with the RPCR receiving 9.6% of the vote (66 votes). The PFL led by François Néoéré, at that time the Melanesian Secretary-General of the right-wing FN(NC), received 9.8% of the vote (68 votes) there. The abstention rate on the Isle of Pines was 49.9%.² One other Melanesian loyalist group also contested the elections; EPA, led by the former Melanesian RPCR Deputy from Lifou, Franck Wahuzue. It gained a total of 1,116 votes, or 2.4% of the Territorial electorate, indicative perhaps of a Melanesian loyalist preference for the greater following of the RPCR.³

In the September 1985 Regional Elections, actively contested by the FLNKS, the Melanesian loyalist vote on the outlying islands was even higher. The RPCR gained 13.9% of the vote (504 votes) on Maré, 25.9% (1,594 votes) on Lifou, and 26.5% (542 votes) on Ouvéa. Nonetheless, the depth of Melanesian support for independence parties was also shown. The FLNKS gained 34.2% of the vote (1,239 votes) on Maré, 45.8% (2807 votes) on Lifou, and 42.1% (862 votes) on Ouvéa. The LKS received 30.6% of the vote on Maré (1110 votes), 9.4% (579 votes) on Lifou, and 8.7% on Ouvéa (178 votes). Even so, abstentions are also worth noting. On Maré the abstention rate was 21.2%. On Lifou it was 16.2% and on Ouvéa 20%. Where the political sympathies of these Melanesian voters lay is unknown. On the Isle of Pines, 24.5% of the voters (184 votes) were in favour of the RPCR. The FLNKS had a support level of 29.4% (221 votes), and the LKS 16.5% (124 votes). The abstention rate on the Isle of Pines was 21.2%.⁴

The violent events on Ouvéa in 1988 do not seem to have significantly shaken the level of Melanesian support for the RPCR in the Loyalty Islands. In the June 1989 Territorial Elections, the RPCR gained a 33.98% level of support overall in the Loyalty Islands (2,892 votes). The FLNKS gained 45.97% there (3,912 votes) and the LKS 16.93% (1,441 votes). The RPCR gained two seats out of seven in the Loyalty Islands, a small but stable minority.⁵

¹ Jean-Pierre Doumenge: *Diversité ethno-culturelle et expression politique en Nouvelle-Calédonie* in *La Nouvelle-Calédonie: la stratégie, le droit et la République*, ed. A Poher et al. p.57.

² Op cit. Connell pp.326-7.

³ Ibid. pp.321, 327.

⁴ Ibid. p.362-3.

⁵ *Pacific Islands Monthly* July 1989 p.24; *Le Monde* 13/6/89 p.9.

The September 1985 Regional Elections also saw the loyalist Melanesian party RPC contesting seats in the Northern Region of the Grande Terre. Led by Henri Wetta,¹ the RPC was aimed specifically at Melanesian voters who opposed the pro-independence goals of the FLNKS, but who were not willing to vote for the largely European RPCR.² The RPC attracted 8.5% of the vote in the Northern Region (1,058 votes). By way of comparison, the RPCR gained 23.3% of the vote there (2,888 votes).³

The above selected figures indicate a level of Melanesian support for loyalist parties ranging from 8-26% of the Melanesian electorate in certain communes. The Melanesian loyalist vote in the 13 September 1987 self-determination referendum falls approximately midway between the extremes of that range, with 16.8% of the total Melanesian electorate in New Caledonia voting against independence at that time.⁴ This level of support is not great enough to justify Patrick Paitel's earlier assertion of a loyalist Melanesian majority, but nor is the number of Melanesian loyalist voters as marginal as Gabriel and Kermel would lead their readers to believe. Instead, Melanesian loyalists form a small but not insignificant electoral minority within the greater Melanesian electorate in New Caledonia.

Melanesian loyalists may be subdivided into two groups. There are those, often tribal elders, who desire continued links with France on the basis of its support for their custom status within the tribal milieu. Others, usually Melanesians living within the European social environment of Nouméa, support ties with the French Republic on the grounds of progress and modernity, arguing that the route to Melanesian prosperity lies with integration into the Territory's Western-style economy. Certain Melanesian loyalists combine elements of both of these viewpoints, particularly on the Loyalty Islands and the Isle of Pines. The lack of European settlement there in the nineteenth century resulted in land ownership not being the political issue it has been on the Grande Terre in the 1980s. The lack of a European presence has also allowed Melanesians on those islands to develop their own entrepreneurial activities. Investments such as those in tourism on the Isle of Pines give these Melanesians an incentive to support the Western-style economy and links with France whilst still living within a tribal environment.⁵ The same belief in the importance of ties with France persists in those islanders who have "emigrated" from the Loyalty Islands to Nouméa to work outside their tribal milieu. They form the Nouméan support base for the Melanesian RPCR Senator Dick Ukeiwé, and Franck Wahuzue.⁶

On the Grande Terre, up country from Nouméa, the appeal of French loyalism for rural Melanesians lies in the French Republic's recognition of tribal custom. The certainty of a continued custom role for conservative tribal elders and their followers within the French legal system remains the European community's strongest asset in appealing to the Melanesian rural minority which opposes the uncertain future implied by the independence goals of the FLNKS. For example, Prime Minister Chirac's administration actively appealed to Melanesian custom chiefs using this approach in an attempt to weaken support for the FLNKS boycott of the 13 September 1987 self-determination referendum. Bernard Pons made a grand tour of the tribes stressing the advantages of remaining within the French Republic, and received a particularly warm welcome from the Tchamba and Nebouba tribes near Ponérihouen. *Le Monde's* reporter remarked that even there, Melanesian adolescents were notable by their absence from tribal welcoming committees.⁷

¹ Wetta was the mayor of the east coast centre of Poindimié and a former RPCR deputy, with the added distinction of being Jean-Marie Tjibaou's brother-in-law. *Le Monde* 2-8/8/88 p.25.

² Connell p.359.

³ Ibid. p.363.

⁴ *Le Monde* 16/9/87 p.9.

⁵ Doumenge: *Diversité ethno-culturelle...* p.57.

⁶ Guiart p.272; Doumenge: *Diversité ethno-culturelle...* p.57.

⁷ *Le Monde* 7/2/87 p.6.

This may be indicative of a generation gap within the tribal milieu. On Ouvéa, where tribal divisions exist between the loyalist Wénéki tribe and the indépendantiste Gossana tribe over the issue of independence, young militants have deserted the loyalist beliefs of their parents. Amongst the Kanaks killed on Ouvéa in May 1988 was Vincent Daoumé, whose father is a custom chief and a prominent local RPCR leader. Also amongst the casualties was Martin Haewé, a *stagiaire libyen* who was also the son of an RPCR supporter.¹ Melanesian youths, having received a French education or spent time away from their tribes whilst working in Nouméa, are less prepared than they were in the 1960s to accept the leadership of conservative elders. Such youths perceive conservative elders as being ignorant and backward whilst at the same time using custom to preserve their privileged social position. These youths are more susceptible to the independence goals of the FLNKS than their elders.

For conservative tribal elders, their greatest reproach of young FLNKS militants is that they are ignorant of custom, that they have no respect for tribal tradition and are too Europeanised by Western socialism. The following remarks, made in 1983 by Lucien Paulin, grand chief of Ouatom-La Foa, bear all the signs of an old man entrenched on one side of a generation gap:

On entend parler de clans, mais qui peut le faire avec exactitude, à part les vieux qui connaissent la coutume? Actuellement, les jeunes en parlent, mais qu'est-ce qu'ils en savent?²

Félix Mandoué, grand chief of the Ba Nindia, Waraï and Houaïlou districts, is another elder who disapproves of indépendantistes on similar grounds. An action which reinforced his distrust was a decision made by FLNKS militants in 1984 to hold a political meeting at the foot of a banyan tree normally reserved for the adjudication of custom business.³ For Mandoué, such an action was typical of their lack of respect for tradition. For the FLNKS members responsible, the designated meeting place was no doubt aimed to give the gathering the added authority of a custom setting.

Conservative tribal elders are not alone in their distrust of indépendantistes on the basis of custom. Urban Melanesian loyalists exhibit the same dislike, particularly those with some custom standing. They view FLNKS members as being inauthentic Kanaks due to their questioning of established authority, and assume they must be socially inferior to wish to do so. In 1983, Marco Waheo, then President of the MJCF, discounted the political credibility of indépendantiste leaders due to their reported lack of social standing within the tribal hierarchy:

Pidjot, Machoro, Iékawé et compagnie ne sont pas des gens sérieux. Coutumièrement, ce sont des esclaves, c'est-à-dire des descendants de prisonniers des guerres tribales.⁴

By European standards, Waheo's remarks sound extremely snobbish. It is impossible to imagine a metropolitan French Deputy publicly using this argument to discredit his or her opposition. Custom is a double-edged weapon though, and certain urban Melanesian loyalists use it against indépendantistes at their peril, considering that they too have adopted many Western perspectives whilst living in Nouméa. In 1983 Dick Ukeiwé said of Melanesian FI leaders: "Sur place, les hommes politiques mélanésiens qui parlent de coutume, leaders du Front Indépendantiste ou conseillers occultes cachés dans les bureaux administratifs, n'ont aucune existence coutumière."⁵ The same might be argued of Dick Ukeiwé who, as an RPCR leader, was also spending considerable periods of time outside the tribal milieu in 1983.

One example of the paradoxical thinking that can result is to be found in the 1982 views of Jeannine Bouteille of the Melanesian Foundation of the AFC, affiliated to

¹ See *Le Monde* 26/5/88 p.17; 29/6/88 p.9. The phrase *stagiaire libyen* refers to the small and often-cited group of FLNKS militants who spent time in Libya receiving training of an unspecified nature.

² *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7/1/83 op. cit. AFC p.159.

³ *Le Nouvel Observateur* 28/12/84 p.34.

⁴ *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 7/1/83 op. cit. AFC p.167.

⁵ *Ibid.* 8/12/83 op. cit. AFC p.100.

the RPCR. While accusing FI members of being ignorant of custom and "...manipulés par des meneurs politiques marxistes-racistes", she herself employed some very untraditional thinking. Her assumptions about rural Kanaks match those of Tonton and Joël Pierrot of Bourail surprisingly well.* Like Joël Pierrot ("La terre à ceux qui la travaillent."), Mme. Bouteille saw no justification for the FI's aims of increasing the size of tribal reserves through land claims. For her there was no need because "aucun jeune ne veut plus travailler pour la communauté". The communal ownership and working of land, one of the cornerstones of Melanesian custom, should be abandoned in favour of private land tenure for young Melanesians. This would encourage an individualistic work ethic amongst them.¹ The reactions of grand chiefs like Félix Mandoué and Lucien Paulin to such a statement can only be imagined, but it is doubtful they would be positive.

Herein lies the fundamental problem for the two groups within the Melanesian loyalist segment of New Caledonia's population: the reconciliation of Melanesian tradition with European modernity. The same issue similarly arises amongst Melanesian indépendantistes. The support of rural Melanesian conservatives for ties with France rests on the perception that the French Republic entrenches their custom authority and upholds tribal tradition. For an urban Melanesian loyalist like Mme. Bouteille, despite her labelling of Melanesian indépendantistes as being ignorant of custom, she too has been Europeanised to the extent of rejecting fundamental tenets of Melanesian tribal life such as collective ownership of land in favour of Western individualist economic principles. For her, ties with France are more significant in terms of modernity than tradition. European economic values and methods offer Melanesians a means of self-improvement and contact with the twentieth century. The future of the Melanesian community is "vivre en paix dans le modernisme avec la France..." rather than the prospect of "...bien vivre dans la misère avec l'Indépendance "Kanake" Socialiste gérée par une nation étrangère raciste."² For her, like Caldoche and metropolitan French conservatives,³ Melanesian independence is synonymous with backwardness.

Dick Ukeiwé, RPCR Senator for New Caledonia and the figurehead of the Melanesian loyalists, has an outlook on the future of Melanesians in New Caledonia which mixes elements of both the modern and the traditional. Section three of his "Ukeiwé Project", presented on 24 January 1985 to President Mitterrand, envisaged the recognition of "une sorte de Sénat coutumier à l'échelle du territoire afin d'aboutir à une «assemblée des sages», avec un large pouvoir consultatif."⁴ In 1984, Franck Wahuzue's EPA also held the recognition of a similar *conseil des grands chefs* as a central part of its programme.⁵ The text of the 26 June 1988 Matignon Accords recognised similar, but less far-reaching provincial bodies:

1. (e) Les organismes consultatifs; le conseil consultatif coutumier provincial regroupe les grands chefs des aires coutumières de la province. Il est consulté par le conseil de province sur les projets ou propositions de délibérations portant sur les questions de droit civil particulier et de droit foncier. Il peut être consulté sur toute autre matière à l'initiative du président de la province. A son initiative, il peut saisir le conseil de province de toute question ou proposition concernant le statut de droit civil particulier et le statut des réserves foncières mélanésiennes.⁶

Alongside Dick Ukeiwé's support for the enshrinement of custom law within French Republican law coexists a belief in European values. In 1983 he made public his belief that the power of tribal ties is declining for the Melanesian inhabitants of Nouméa

* See above p.16.

¹ AFC p.146.

² *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 19/10/82 op. cit. AFC p.150.

³ Claude Martinez in *La Nouvelle-Calédonie: la stratégie, le droit et la République* ed. A. Poher et al. p.194; Paitel p.291; Jacques Lafleur in *Le Monde* 6-7/1/85 p.1; cf. below p.37.

⁴ *Le Monde* 26/1/85 p.10.

⁵ Connell p.321.

⁶ BIPA, Yellow File 882014206.

and its environs "(...qui) abritent actuellement quelque 30,000 Mélanésien et 4,000 familles y sont propriétaires de leur terrain et de leur maison. Pour nous la tribu ne constitue plus qu'une référence sentimentale."¹ Here, Ukeiwé's emphasis is on the future prospect of each Melanesian family owning its own house and section of land. To what extent the 21% of New Caledonia's Melanesian population who live in Nouméa's urban environment² share similar aspirations is open to speculation. For those Melanesians who are unemployed, working in temporary jobs or in minor posts in the SLN and who are living in substandard or temporary accommodation, links with their tribes and the opportunity to return to them assume greater importance than for that small (but statistically unquantified) affluent group of Melanesians with well-paid, steady work in the civil service, the RPCR, or in commercial posts. Connell indicated in 1987 that it was the latter select group, most ably prepared to lead the Melanesian community into a state of greater autonomy, which was the least likely to actually do so given its privileged status within Caldoche society and its acceptance of its values.³ Under the Matignon Accords, which allow for regional development and encourage the greater participation of Melanesians in the Territorial administration,⁴ that Westernised Melanesian minority is likely to expand. FLNKS leaders within the Territorial administration who experience the material benefits of the Matignon Accords may use them to further their independence goals, or may decide that working within the French administration beyond 1998 is a not altogether unpleasant prospect.⁵

Non-European immigrants - not all loyalists

If information on Melanesian loyalism is scarce and Melanesian loyalists are frequently overlooked in examinations of New Caledonia's political life, this applies to an even greater degree when searching for concrete details on the political views of New Caledonia's non-European immigrant population. Numbering 29,524 inhabitants and forming 20.3% of the total population according to the 1983 ITSEE census,* this diverse group confounds even further the simple bipolar Melanesian indépendantiste versus European loyalist analysis of New Caledonian politics. Amongst this 20.3% of New Caledonia's population, the 1983 ITSEE census listed the presence of 12,174 Wallisians and Futunans (8.5% of the population), 5,570 French Polynesians (3.8%), 2,381 Vietnamese (1.6%), 5,319 Indonesians (3.7%), 1,212 Ni-Vanuatu Melanesians (0.8%), and 2,868 "others" (2%).⁶

For the Caldoches, the presence of the different groups which form New Caledonia's non-European immigrant population is the product of a tolerant, multi-racial society in action. In 1980 Brou held up the example of Vietnamese, Tahitians, Wallisians, Indonesians and a range of others mixing and co-existing peaceably in the streets of Nouméa, free of racial prejudice:

La sortie des cinémas et le public des stades offrent des tableaux très variés de la société pluriethnique de Nouvelle-Calédonie, et l'on constate facilement que le racisme n'existe pas dans ce pays.⁷

A sweeping statement indeed. That people sit together in theatres and stadiums or walk along the same streets in Nouméa should not be thought to imply that racism does not exist there. Nor should Nouméa be considered as representative of the entire

¹ Op. cit. Cercle KATARA: Mélanésien de demain? p.32.

² Pascal Gantelet et al. (eds.): Tableaux de l'économie calédonienne p.32.

³ Connell: Melanesian Nationalism in New Caledonia: Essays on Nationalism and Dependency eds. M. Spencer, A. Ward and J. Connell p.241.

⁴ See BIPA Yellow File 882014205.

⁵ There are accusations within the FLNKS that UC leaders are becoming preoccupied with personal material gain to the detriment of future independence goals. See Le Monde 5-6/11/89 p.7.

* Cf. above p.3.

⁶ Op. cit. Connell p.222

⁷ Brou p.19.

Territory, for the variety of ethnic groups living there is the exception rather than the rule. The 1983 ITSEE census concluded that 90% of all Wallisians in New Caledonia were inhabitants of greater Nouméa, 88% of French Polynesians, 96% of Vietnamese, and 76% of all Indonesians, to name but four examples.¹ Those non-European immigrants not residing in Nouméa are predominantly distributed around the Southern Province of the Grande Terre, the only Province where the RPCR holds an electoral majority.² Geographically, if not necessarily politically, they are very much a part of Caldochie.

There is not a wealth of detailed evidence available on the voting patterns of these groups. A discussion of their histories and immigration patterns is not possible here and is available in detail elsewhere.³ Instead, just four groups who display differing levels of political commitment to French loyalism will be briefly discussed. Firstly, the two main components of New Caledonia's Polynesian population, namely Wallis and Futuna Islanders, and French Polynesians. Secondly the two main groups who form New Caledonia's Asian community; those of Vietnamese and Indonesian origin. Evidence of the political views of even these selected groups is flimsy and incomplete, with a dearth of sources from which to draw sound conclusions. In the past, it has been concluded that generally non-European immigrant communities vote *en masse* for loyalist parties, mainly the RPCR.⁴ Besset indicates that the economic well-being of these immigrants lies in New Caledonia's Western economy, upon which their future in the Territory is dependent. As a result, they are wary of living in an independent Kanaky:

Même si les conditions dans lesquelles ils vivent sont loin d'être enviables, ils les préfèrent au saut dans l'inconnu que constituerait le changement de souveraineté.⁵

Given past statements by the FLNKS that recent non-European immigrants do not fulfil the FLNKS's "victims of history" criteria for electoral eligibility, or future residency in Kanaky, this is scarcely surprising.⁶ When non-European immigrants are mentioned by Melanesian indépendantistes, their descriptions are somewhat less glowing than Brou's. For indépendantistes such immigrants, rather than being proof of New Caledonia as a multi-racial society, have been regarded as intruders introduced by Caldoche politicians and/or the Paris government to flood New Caledonia with cheap labour and erode the local Melanesian demographic majority, thus tipping the electoral balance further in favour of the Caldoche community. Suzanne Ounei, an FLNKS activist, describes immigrants in general as the scum of the earth.⁷ More specifically, of non-European immigrants she has said: "They used these people against us [the Kanaks] by giving them our jobs."⁸

Of these ethnic groups, for local Melanesians the greatest enmity is reserved for Wallis and Futuna Islanders. Since their influx at the time of New Caledonia's nickel boom from the late 1960s, considerable racial tension has existed between Melanesians and these Polynesian immigrants. The permanent settlement of these islanders, reinforced by the fact that their numbers in New Caledonia are now greater than in their home islands,⁹ has been an important cause of this tension. For example, in mid-1980, the Territorial administration proposed the reallocation of an estate near Dumbéa to Wallis Islanders for settlement. Madame Roch Pidjot led an FI campaign against this decision and claimed the land in question for various dispossessed clans. The administration eventually abandoned the reallocation amidst rising racial hostility

¹ Op. cit. Pascal Gantelet et al (eds.): Tableaux de l'économie calédonienne p.32.

² See Connell p.222.

³ See Brou: Peuplement et population...; Connell: New Caledonia or Kanaky?

⁴ Dornoy p.59; Connell p.239, p.272.

⁵ Besset p.68.

⁶ E.g. J-M Tjibaou in Le Monde 25/1/85 p.6. Cf. above p.8.

⁷ Suzanne Ounei: For Kanak Independence: the fight against French rule in New Caledonia p.10.

⁸ Ounei: public discussion 18/4/89.

⁹ Dornoy p.73.

between Kanaks and Wallisians, which peaked with a sizeable street brawl during Nouméa's 1980 *grande braderie*.¹

Guiart has gone so far as to suggest this incident was part of a larger plan by the Territorial administration to use Wallisian settlements as "barriers" against Melanesians. He cites the establishment of Wallisians in lots around the outskirts of Nouméa, the building of a Wallisian village at Thio on land claimed by Melanesians, and their settlement at Houaïlou adjacent to the Nédivin tribe, as other examples of the provocative strategic location of Wallisians.² Whether this is really some conscious plot, or merely the result of thoughtless planning in action is open to question, but such settlements are undeniable sources of tension. Along with those Caldoches who fled Thio in 1985 following Eloi Machoro's occupation of the centre were an uncounted number of Wallisians who were not enthusiastic about the prospect of remaining with the FLNKS militants roaming the area.*

Wallisians and Futunans have in the past been stereotyped by Melanesian indépendantistes as being easily led by the Caldoches. Their employment in the 1980s as bodyguards and in the front-line of anti-independence demonstrations by the RPCR has done much to confirm this reputation. However, Wallisian participation in loyalist party politics extends deeper than these activities. Caldoche conservative parties sought Wallisian support as far back as the early 1970s. In 1972 EDS and the MLC assisted New Caledonia's first two Wallisian representatives into the Territorial Assembly.³ Since then, with the exception of ETE, a loyalist party aimed specifically at non-European minority groups between 1976 and 1978,⁴ Wallisians have predominantly followed conservative Caldoche parties, the most important of which has been the RPCR since its formation in 1978.

Since the mid-1980s though, there have been indications that Wallisians and Futunans are increasingly searching for their own political voice, a search which has involved a drift away from strict adherence to the RPCR. The first sign of differences between the RPCR and its Wallisian supporters came in 1982 when Petelo Manuofua, the RPCR's only Wallisian representative, resigned from the party to become an independent.⁵ Then UMF was formed for the March 1983 Municipal Elections.⁶ In November 1984 UMF contested the November Territorial Elections. Led by Kalépo Muliava,[†] the party aimed to serve Wallis and Futuna Islanders more comprehensively than the RPCR had done prior to that stage whilst still adhering to loyalist principles.⁷ UMF placed candidates only in Nouméa and the Southern Region of the Grande Terre, where its demographic support base was concentrated. It gained a mere 566 votes (1.4% of the total electorate).⁸ At that time, Wallis and Futuna Islanders still preferred the broader electoral appeal of the RPCR.

That situation changed remarkably in 1989 when the UO participated in the 11 June Provincial Elections. Although led by the same Kalépo Muliava, the UO was much more radical in outlook than UMF in that the party did not seek to align itself with the RPCR's loyalist goals. Instead, Kalépo Muliava proclaimed the UO's "cousinage culturel avec les Canaques", which led the RPCR to accuse the UO of having a "ton d'extrême droite, par son caractère racial."⁹ Muliava was just as critical of the RPCR, attacking the party's electoral clientelism of Wallisians through its patronage of

¹ Alan Ward: *Land and politics in New Caledonia* pp.56-57.

² Guiart pp.281-282.

* Cf. above p.12.

³ Dornoy p.60.

⁴ Ibid. p.66.

⁵ Connell p.300.

⁶ Ibid. p.307.

[†] Muliava died aged 51 on 12 August 1989. See *Le Monde* 15/8/89 p.16.

⁷ Connell p.322.

⁸ Op. cit. ibid. p.327.

⁹ *Le Monde* 10/6/89 p.14.

Wallisian custom authority, and its use of unemployed Wallisian youths as RPCR bodyguards. He also stated that under the tutelage of the RPCR the Wallisian and Futunan community "n'a pas avancé d'un pouce depuis dix ans. Nous sommes aussi marginalisés que les Canaques." With a Wallisian unemployment rate of 50%, and only two Wallisians in the Territorial administration, Muliava's faith in the RPCR had dissipated.¹ His views were not merely held in isolation. In the June 1988 Provincial Elections, the UO won two out of 32 seats in the Southern Province.² The UO's total support was 2,429 votes or 6.19% of the Southern electorate.³ Wallis and Futuna Islanders have now gained their own independent political voice in New Caledonia, and have begun to dispel their stereotype as unthinking followers of RPCR conservatism.

The second largest community of South Pacific immigrants in New Caledonia consists of French Polynesians, 88% of whom live in Nouméa.⁴ They are the only immigrant community whose population declined following the nickel boom of the early 1970s. Unlike other immigrant groups, who preferred to stay on in New Caledonia for want of better prospects in their homelands, French Polynesians have not displayed the same reluctance. Between 1976 and 1983, their numbers in New Caledonia declined 1.7% per annum, falling from 6,391 inhabitants in 1976 to 5,570 inhabitants in 1983.⁵

With this decline in confidence in life in New Caledonia, it might be expected that French Polynesian confidence in the RPCR also declined. Dornoy has asserted that the majority of French Polynesians in New Caledonia favour autonomy,⁶ yet evidence of this is not abundant. Admittedly, the French Polynesian loyalist party ETP which contested the November 1984 Territorial Elections was not notable for its high level of support by Nouméan French Polynesians, receiving a mere 269 votes (0.7% of the total electorate).⁷ Conversely though, it is unclear just how many French Polynesians vote for the FLNKS. It is worth noting that no successful French Polynesian party with similar goals to the UO has arrived on the New Caledonian political scene. Precisely where the support of the majority of the French Polynesian electorate does lie is unclear. Although living predominantly within the confines of the loyalist-dominated Southern Province, French Polynesian attitudes to its politics remain undefined.

Even more obscure is the question of the political stance(s) of New Caledonia's Asian community in the late 1980s. Unlike the 1950s when, for example, the Vietnamese community in New Caledonia was caught in the centre of a political incident with regard to Vietnam's independence from France and incurred the hostility of Caldoche conservatives,⁸ in the 1980s, evidence of *any* form of Asian political expression in New Caledonia has been singularly lacking. Connell concludes this is a result of the past harassment the Vietnamese and other Asians have experienced at the hands of the Caldoches. Such harassment is assumed to have produced in Asians a great reluctance to become actively involved in politics.⁹ Another possible reason for this lack of a distinct Asian political viewpoint is the degree to which Asians have become assimilated into the wider Caldoche community. Dornoy contends that the Vietnamese community is generally uninvolved in politics, but is predominantly loyalist.¹⁰ Following Vietnam's unification under Communist rule in 1975, few if any of New Caledonia's inhabitants of Vietnamese origin would ever contemplate returning there. Indeed, around 500 Vietnamese refugees born in New Caledonia prior to the 1950s who returned to Vietnam following the French withdrawal in 1954 subsequently re-migrated to New Caledonia after the 1975 North Vietnamese invasion of South

¹ *Le Monde* 10/6/89 p.14.

² *Pacific Islands Monthly* July 1989 p.24.

³ *Le Monde* 13/6/89 p.9.

⁴ See below p.28.

⁵ Op. cit. Christnacht p.26.

⁶ Dornoy p.78.

⁷ Op. cit. Connell p.327.

⁸ Dornoy pp.45-48.

⁹ Connell p.221.

¹⁰ Dornoy p.80.

Vietnam.¹ Like those inhabitants of Vietnamese origin who remained in New Caledonia during the 1950s and 1960s, they have overwhelmingly adopted French citizenship and see no future in a return to Vietnam. For that reason they support the RPCR electorally, yet are not noteworthy for their presence in the party's hierarchy.

The second major component of New Caledonia's Asian community, those of Indonesian origin, are even more of a silent minority. Like New Caledonia's inhabitants of Vietnamese origin, they are unwilling to leave New Caledonia and in their silence have lent electoral support to the RPCR. Concerning the Indonesian community's current political beliefs, little else can be said.²

From this brief, and in places scanty, overview, it is now clear that few substantial supportable claims can be made about the political views of the diverse ethnic groups which form New Caledonia's non-European immigrant population. Although an undefined number of them are electorally committed to French loyalism, the depth of this commitment varies from the silent support of the RPCR in the Asian community, through to the formation of fledgling loyalist political parties by immigrant Polynesians. The entry of the Wallisian UO into New Caledonian politics in 1989 displays that New Caledonia's non-European immigrants are not as rigidly loyalist as was once believed and that they are only prepared to support the RPCR as long as they feel that the party represents their future interests.

¹ Connell p.221.

² Ibid. p.220.

Chapter Two - loyalist party politics

Foreword: personality politics and ideological considerations

Chapter One discussed the identities of the diverse groups within New Caledonia's loyalists. Chapter Two is concerned with the expression of loyalist views in the political arena. For a Territory with a population of less than 150,000,* party politics in New Caledonia involves a comparatively large number of different political groups which often last little more than a few months before disbanding. The June 1989 Provincial Elections alone involved thirteen parties canvassing votes from an electorate of only 91,259.¹ In 1989, the oldest and largest of New Caledonia's conservative parties, the RPCR, was a mere eleven years old. The oldest parties of the extreme right are even more recent arrivals: the FC was founded only in 1982, while the FN(NC) began in 1984. The smallest of New Caledonia's political groupings are usually less the expression of a conservative current within New Caledonian politics than a vehicle for the views of an outspoken individual. Justin Guillemard furnishes a good example, being the motive force behind RURALE, the early FC and later the CAP, all of which will be discussed in more detail below. François Néoéré's VFVF, a Melanesian loyalist party formed for the March 1986 French Elections,² and Kalépo Muliava's UMF are other examples of small, short-lived parties held together by forceful individuals.

On a political scene as small as New Caledonia's, personality is almost invariably as strong an element as ideology. Personality differences within party ranks are frequently the cause of the individual shifts in party adherence which occur in New Caledonian politics.³ Certain high-ranking RPCR officials began their political careers in the UC, now the largest party within the FLNKS. Dick Ukeiwé is the most notable example, having left the UC in 1960. Such a change in political alignment in the relatively distant past is less radical than those switches made by other individuals during the 1970s and 1980s. Roger Galliot for instance began his political career with the UC, shifted to the centrist FNSC, then moved to the more conservative RPCR before joining the extreme right-wing FN(NC).⁴ An even more extreme example of political fence-jumping is to be found in François Néoéré's political career. In the space of just five years, he transformed himself from being an indépendantiste FI electoral candidate in 1979 into the Secretary-General of the extreme right-wing FN(NC) by

* See above p.3.

¹ *Le Monde* 13/6/89 p.9.

² Connell p.370.

³ Dornoy p.260.

⁴ Gabriel and Kermel pp.108-109.

1984.¹ Franck Wahuzue, a member of the indépendantiste Foulards rouges in the late 1960s was a prominent representative of the RPCR by the mid-1980s, which he reportedly left due to Lafleur's "colonial" outlook. He reverted to being a moderate indépendantiste by the late 1980s.²

Other examples of this sort of political shift in allegiance abound in New Caledonian politics and serve to undermine rigidly doctrinaire ideological analyses which split New Caledonian politics into two mutually exclusive camps opposed over the issue of independence.³ Consider for example the members of the Lapetite family who were responsible for the death of 10 FLNKS members in the Hienghène massacre on 5 December 1984. The Lapetites were labelled by Ounei as "a group of fascists" and by Guiart as "illettrés secondaires véritablement à demi sauvages...".⁴ These left-wing stereotypes do not accord with the Lapetites' reputation amongst Hienghène's inhabitants for being *encanaqué*. Raoul Lapetite had a Melanesian mother.⁵ In 1942 at the age of 17 he was instrumental in preventing a broussard vigilante group from lynching a gang of Melanesian labourers after one of them murdered a Caldoche foreman. The incident was known as "l'affaire Bouyé".⁶ Raoul Lapetite and his sons were considered to have better relations with local Melanesians than with Hienghène's European inhabitants. Two of the Melanesians killed in the Hienghène ambush, Auguste and Alphonse Wathéa, were family friends of the Lapetites, with whom they regularly went hunting.⁷ Jean-Claude Lapetite was a member of PALIKA, an indépendantiste party for whom he stood as an electoral candidate in 1982, and was involved with the FI/FLNKS up to the occurrence of the ambush in December 1984.⁸ Any examination of New Caledonian politics which relies solely on ideological dogmatism and ignores the whims of human personality will inevitably fall short of explaining such connections, for they do not necessarily have purely ideological explanations.

The RPCR - "un front de refus"?

The RPCR is the largest conservative party in New Caledonia. Like the FLNKS it is a varied coalition. On its formation in 1978, the RPCR combined diverse conservative political tendencies and interest groups: Gaullists, Giscardians, Chiraquiens, Republicans, Departmentalists, broussards and Nouméan businessmen as well as the different ethnic groups discussed in Chapter One. Besset indicates that such distinctions are still prominent within the party a decade after its formation.⁹ Coulon believes that these varied interest groups within the RPCR are united on only two points: opposition to Kanak independence and the support of European-dominated capitalism within the Territory.¹⁰ Even the second of these two points is open to question. Coulon himself mentioned in 1985 the division over economic issues existing within the RPCR between Justin Guillemard and Nouméan business interests.¹¹ Considering such differences it cannot be categorically asserted that the RPCR has been united even on economic matters.

¹ Connell p.323.

² *Le Nouvel Observateur* 13-19/5/88 p.42; *Le Point* 4/7/88 p.30.

³ Cf. Michael Spencer who makes a pertinent point concerning New Caledonia with his suggestion that "it's not all black and white". See Spencer: *"It's not all black and white"*, ch.9 of *New Caledonia: Essays in Nationalism and Dependency* eds. Spencer et al.

⁴ Ounei p.11; Guiart p.XI.

⁵ Duroy p.127.

⁶ Ibid. p.141.

⁷ Ibid. p.31.

⁸ Ibid. p.223.

⁹ Besset p.42.

¹⁰ Coulon p.148.

¹¹ Ibid. cf. above p.13.

That leaves just one of Coulon's criteria upon which there has reportedly been unanimous agreement within the RPCR: opposition to Kanak independence. In its early years, the RPCR's rejection of independence overrode other in-depth policy considerations, leaving the party with very little in the way of clearly stated policy. The RPCR waited four years after its formation in 1978 before holding its first party conference. Connell notes that as late as 1982, the RPCR was "unused to doing [anything] other than reacting", and it had not formulated social and economic policies beyond its unconditional support for continued association with the French Republic.¹ Besset commented in 1988 that the RPCR still "ne constitue rien d'autre qu'un front de refus."²

Evidence is abundant of the RPCR's past refusal to accept the independence claims of the FI and, from 1984, of the FLNKS. Public rejections of Melanesian independence claims by RPCR leaders reached their greatest level of vehemence in the mid-1980s when political tensions were particularly high. In 1984 Jacques Lafleur made some blunt statements with regard to the FLNKS's goals:

Je suis persuadé que le FLNKS a une idée raciste, marxiste, canaque, haineuse. Mes convictions sont que ce pays n'a aucune envie de devenir indépendant et que ce n'est pas son intérêt, et que ce n'est pas celui de la France.³

S'il s'agit de rendre la Nouvelle-Calédonie indépendante, je dis que c'est une couillonnade monstrueuse...l'indépendance de la Nouvelle-Calédonie est une stupidité!⁴

Roger Laroque, noted for his hard-line views, demonstrated no tolerance for the FLNKS at all. He stated shortly before his death in 1985 that "le FLNKS est une organisation qui n'a pas le droit d'exister."⁵ Associated with such views was an outright rejection of any of the political assertions of the indépendantistes. Given the attitudes of the RPCR's leaders,* any possibility of successful dialogue with the FI/FLNKS was remote during the mid-1980s. The July 1983 Nainville-les-Roches negotiations concluded with an RPCR refusal to sign the declaration resulting from the conference partly due to its recognition of the need to abolish the "fait colonial" in New Caledonia.⁶ For Roger Laroque in 1983, New Caledonia's "fait colonial", the French left's term for describing New Caledonia's political and social inheritance from the 19th century, was simply nonsense.⁷ For him, New Caledonia's "fait colonial" was "ce qui n'a jamais été ici autre chose qu'un traité de protectorat conclu pacifiquement, sans tirer un coup de fusil, entre Européens et Mélanésien afin de mettre fin aux guerres tribales et aux famines qui décimaient alors les "premiers occupants" et les menaçaient d'extinction".⁸ With his belief in such a benevolent colonial past it is scarcely surprising that Laroque saw no need for the existence of the FI. His words indicate the ideological gulf that existed between RPCR leaders and their FLNKS counterparts at that time.

Very little basis for mutual understanding existed between the two parties at the 1983 Nainville-les-Roches meetings, as Lafleur himself retold: "A Nainville-les-Roches, en juillet 1983, j'ai été estomaqué quand Yeiwené Yeiwené m'a dit: «Vous, on vous accepte parce que vous êtes une victime d'histoire!» Je ne me sens pas une victime de histoire! Je ne rougis pas d'être français."⁹ When Lafleur's personal fortune of

¹ Connell p.301.

² Besset p.42.

³ Le Monde 18/11/84 p.10.

⁴ Ibid. 6-7/1/85 p.1.

⁵ Ibid. 21-22/4/85 p.9.

* And of course the increasingly militant attitudes of the FI/FLNKS.

⁶ Connell p.310. See Duroy p.206 for the full text.

⁷ "Fait colonial" amongst other things signifies racial discrimination and unequal land distribution within New Caledonia. See Jacques Brunhès (a French PC deputy) for a typical definition in BIPA Yellow File 00607885300350.

⁸ Le Corail September 1983 op. cit. AFC p.83. Concerning "premiers occupants" see above pp.9-10.

⁹ Le Monde 6-7/1/85 p.1.

82,500,000 metropolitan francs is considered alongside his patriotism, one can see his point.¹ Yet such an anecdote also demonstrated the RPCR leader's scepticism regarding the FLNKS's ideological definitions.

The RPCR "front de refus" mentioned by Besset has not only been directed at Melanesian indépendantistes in the past. Another salient trait unifying the diverse groups within the RPCR has been their distrust of the metropolitan French government.* The RPCR's "front de refus" against Kanak independence has in past years also been directed at successive metropolitan administrations. Since Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's Presidency in the 1970s, the party has repeatedly opposed reformist plans by metropolitan French governments of both the left and right. Giscard d'Estaing's enthusiasm for the Dijoud Plan during his July 1979 visit to the Territory was not greeted with support from the RPCR. The RPCR opposed the Plan's proposed land reforms, and was likewise hostile when Paul Dijoud suggested further land reforms in 1980.²

Similar opposition greeted the Lemoine Statute, formulated under the Mitterrand administration in 1983 by Georges Lemoine, the Secretary of State for DOM-TOM. During the Statute's formulation and after its adoption by the National Assembly, the RPCR refused to engage in any dialogue concerning the Statute, or to recognise the Statute's proposals for internal autonomy and a proposed referendum on independence in 1989.³ Jacques Lafleur condemned the Statute outright, claiming the PS was in league with the FI to lead New Caledonia into independence.⁴ Dick Ukeiwé summed up conservative fears that the Statute would lead New Caledonia into disaster:

Qu'entendez-vous par statut évolutif et de transition [le statut Lemoine]? Evolutif vers quoi? L'anarchie politique? La politique des petits copains? Le *malheur* de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et ses habitants? L'effondrement économique et social? De transition? A nouveau, je vous demande vers quoi? La *guerre civile*? La domination assurée des anglo-saxons ou pire encore des pays de l'Est, de Cuba? ⁵

For all Ukeiwé's fears that New Caledonia would be led into disaster, the FI proved to be equally hostile to the Lemoine Statute, claiming its schedule for a referendum was too slow and should be advanced to 1985. The Mitterrand administration, as events unfolded in 1984, found itself clinging to a statute which neither of the two main parties in New Caledonia desired.⁶

In 1985 the Mitterrand government found itself openly rejected again by the RPCR over its support for the Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute. Edgard Pisani, the Socialist government's delegate to New Caledonia in 1984 and High Commissioner from 4 December 1984 became a major source of antagonism for the RPCR. His January 1985 proposal for New Caledonian independence in association with France was opposed by the RPCR on the grounds that it, like the Lemoine Statute, would pave the way to full independence.⁷ Dick Ukeiwé had stated the party's opposition to any such plan in 1983:

Politiquement, nous [le RPCR] ne voulons d'aucun statut qui... nous conduirait à l'indépendance... Nous sommes donc, nous l'avons toujours été, contre tout statut d'autonomie politique transitoire, escalier de l'indépendance.⁸

¹ *Le Monde* 20/10/88 p.10.

* Cf. above p.6.

² Connell p.281. Dijoud was then the Secretary of State to DOM-TOM.

³ *Ibid.* p.311.

⁴ *BIPA* White File 29/5/84.

⁵ *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 8/12/83 op. cit. AFC p.101 (original italics).

⁶ Connell p.334.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.338.

⁸ *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes* 5/10/83 op. cit. AFC p.54.

The Pisani Plan as it was known was later largely integrated into the Pisani/Fabius Interim Statute, along with parts of the Lemoine Statute. The RPCR's April 1985 Conference rejected the electoral division of New Caledonia into four Regions due to the certainty that the minority FLNKS was assured electoral predominance in at least two of those Regions, the Loyalty Islands and the North. The majority RPCR would hold electoral predominance in the South alone, with only the Central Region as an electorally marginal area. Lafleur accused Fabius of gerrymandering in favour of the FLNKS because the South with 85,100 inhabitants (59% of the Territory's population) was to be represented by only 18 seats. The other three Regions, with a total of only 61,000 inhabitants (45% of the population) were to be represented by 25 seats.¹ Ukeiwé criticised the new electoral plan as "une minorité d'électeurs [avec] une majorité de sièges."²

The election of the Chirac administration in 1986 marked the beginning of a new period of relations between the RPCR and the metropolitan French government. For the RPCR, the new Prime Minister Jacques Chirac was, as the leader of the RPR, a more acceptable head of government than a PS representative. The RPCR enjoyed privileged links with the RPR: Jacques Lafleur and Maurice Nénou represented the RPCR's interests as RPR Deputies in the French National Assembly. Yet noticeable points of discord between the RPCR and the French government still existed under Chirac's administration. Bernard Pons, the RPR's spokesman for New Caledonia from 12 December 1984, was appointed as the new Minister of DOM-TOM on 1 April 1986.³ He later commented that his relations with the RPCR were not harmonious:

J'ai trouvé en face de moi un RPCR dur et déterminé qui ne souhaitait faire aucune concession à la minorité indépendantiste...Qu'est-ce que je n'ai pas entendu de la part du RPCR! Il considérait que je faisais la part trop belle au FLNKS.⁴

Within weeks of his appointment as Minister, Pons was facing RPCR opposition. The first incident occurred on 29 April 1986 when the RPCR rejected Pons' Territorial budget because it allocated allegedly excessive funding to the Regions administered by FLNKS representatives.⁵ The RPCR also expressed dissatisfaction over Pons' decision to remove certain executive powers from the Territorial Congress and concentrate them with the High Commissioner.⁶ Using his position as an RPR Deputy, Lafleur later expressed RPCR dissatisfaction with Pons' 4 November 1987 Autonomy Statute in the French National Assembly. Lafleur claimed that the Autonomy Statute was biased in favour of the FLNKS in that Article 40 required a two-thirds majority for all decisions to be passed by the Territory's executive body. The Law Commission of the National Assembly supported Lafleur's claim that this would enable the FLNKS to block RPCR majority initiatives.⁷

Despite RPCR confrontation over certain of Pons' proposals, the party's interests were more secure under him than with Lemoine or Pisani. When Pons presented his plan for the "sauvegarde de la démocratie" in New Caledonia on 29 April 1986, his project included the decision to reconcentrate Territorial funding controls with the Territorial Congress, which reduced the financial autonomy of FLNKS-administered regions from the Nouméan administration.⁸ This move was consistent with Pons' past hostility to the prospect of the FLNKS gaining provisional autonomy

¹ Connell p.351; Hervé Coutau-Bégarie and Jean-Louis Seurin: Nouvelle-Calédonie: les antipodes de la démocratie p.147.

² BIPA White File 25/4/85.

³ Ibid. 12/12/84; 1-2/4/86.

⁴ Le Monde 23/9/88 p.7.

⁵ Ibid. 29/4/86 p.11.

⁶ BIPA White File 29/4/86; Coutau-Bégarie and Seurin p.166.

⁷ Keesing's Contemporary Archives Vol. XXXIV March 1988 p.35778.

⁸ BIPA White File 29/4/86.

within isolated regions of New Caledonia.¹ The result of this decision was that under the Chirac administration between 1986 and 1988, less than three million French francs were allocated to the three FLNKS-controlled regions, while over three and a half million francs were allocated to the RPCR-dominated Southern Region, already the most developed Region within New Caledonia.²

RPCR pressure on the Chirac administration was maintained during the final months before its defeat in the May 1988 French Elections. In February 1988 Lafleur threatened Chirac with his resignation as an RPR Deputy unless the New Caledonian Regional Elections were moved forward to April to precede the French Presidential Elections.³ The RPCR did not desire the elections to be held later in the year after the possible election of a new PS administration. Bernard Pons later admitted in November 1988 that in rescheduling the Regional Elections he had done so as a concession to the RPCR.⁴ But the most interesting aspect of the RPCR's "front de refus" was not its continued presence under Chirac. More important was its dismantlement after Chirac's defeat in May 1988. The result was to be an unprecedented level of successful RPCR dialogue with the FLNKS under the auspices of a PS administration.

Majority conservatism

The RPCR's status as the largest conservative party within New Caledonia has already been noted along with the various social and ethnic groups which lend the party differing levels of support. What remains to be investigated is the RPCR's claim to represent the electoral majority in New Caledonia. One of the cornerstones of the RPCR's political legitimacy has been its majority support: a majority which the FLNKS does not enjoy, as RPCR leaders have in the past shown no hesitation to indicate.

Prior to the September 1985 Regional Elections when it gained control of three out of New Caledonia's four Regions, the FLNKS was regarded by RPCR leaders as an insubstantial group of extremists. Dick Ukeiwé declared in January 1985: "Le FLNKS n'a pas du tout de représentativité politique. Il ne représente qu'une infime minorité au sein même du mouvement indépendantiste, tout comme il n'existe pas coutumièrement."⁵

Similarly Jacques Lafleur, when asked in January 1985 to what extent he believed the FLNKS represented the New Caledonian population, he replied that the party was "une minorité qui ne représente que 10% à 15%". When asked if that 10-15% held physical control of the greater part of the Territory he gave a vigorous response: "C'est rigoureusement faux! Il y a 250 types qui font régner la terreur, sur la côte est à Thio, à Nakéty, en partie à Houailou, aussi à Ponérihouen, Hienghène, Bondé, sur une partie de l'île de Lifou et, sur la côte ouest, un petit peu à Poya, Koné, Poum, Ouégoa, mais cela ne représente au plus un quart du territoire."⁶

Lafleur's image of the FLNKS as a minority party with 10-15% support controlling at most one quarter of the Territory was tested in the September 1985 Regional Elections, the first in which the FLNKS actively participated. In those elections the RPCR found that although it enjoyed majority support, that support was not distributed over the majority of the Territory. This is largely a consequence of New Caledonia's lopsided European and immigrant population distribution. The total RPCR vote of 37,146 (41.37% of the electorate) greatly exceeded the FLNKS's 20,544 votes (22.88% of the electorate) and formed an indisputable majority. But of that total RPCR vote, 71.6% (26,615 votes) was from the Southern Region. 72% of the Southern votes

¹ With regard to Pons' hostility to the FLNKS provisional government in 1984, see BIPA White File 12/12/84.

² Besset p.103.

³ Le Monde 7-8/2/88 p.2.

⁴ Ibid. 23/9/88 p.7.

⁵ Le Monde 26/1/85 p.10.

⁶ Ibid. 6-7/1/85 p.1.

were from Nouméa alone. Only 13.5% of the RPCR's support came from the Central Region (5,003 votes), 7.8% from the North (2,888 votes) and 7.1% from the Loyalty Islands (2,640 votes).¹ The RPCR only had majority support in the South. The RPCR gained 70.6% of the votes there by comparison with the FLNKS's mere 7.5%. Elsewhere, the Regional totals fell in the FLNKS's favour: 45.4% in the Central Region compared with the RPCR's 41.9% of the vote there; 59.6% for the FLNKS in the North compared with 23.3% for the RPCR; and 52.1% for the FLNKS in the Loyalty Islands compared with only 28% for the RPCR.² The RPCR's majority control was only exercised over one of New Caledonia's Regions. Yet it should be noted that in this and in later elections, the RPCR's voting levels in regions where it held only minority support were markedly higher than the levels of support enjoyed by the FLNKS in the South.

The 11 June 1989 Provincial Elections demonstrated a similar pattern. Following the Matignon Accords, New Caledonia's Regions had been redrawn into three Provinces. The border between the Northern and Southern Provinces was drawn across the width of the Grande Terre, while the third Province is the Loyalty Islands. Once again the RPCR, despite gaining a clear overall majority of 27,777 votes (44.46% of the electorate) compared with the FLNKS's 17,898 votes (28.65% of the electorate), only achieved a majority in the South.³ The RPCR received 75% of its support (20,844 votes) from the Southern Province, 14.5% from the North (4,041 votes) and 10.4% (2,892 votes) from the Loyalty Islands. In the South the RPCR gained 53.2% of the Provincial vote compared with the FLNKS's 11.77%, 27.33% in the North alongside the FLNKS's 63.39% and 33.98% of the Loyalty Islands vote compared with the FLNKS's 45.97%.⁴ The redrawing of regional boundaries did little to alter the nature of the RPCR's lopsided voter distribution centred on Nouméa, or the FLNKS's predominance in New Caledonia's regions outside the South of the Grande Terre. This situation whereby a majority party only controls a minority of the Territory is unlikely to change in the near future unless New Caledonia's demographic patterns shift remarkably.

The RPCR - a Nouméan "parti des copains"?

The RPCR's large support base in Nouméa, over 70% of its total support, is the basic cause of past broussard accusations that the party is disinterested in the fate of the Territory's rural European minority. From its inception Nouméan interests have played an important part in the direction of the RPCR. A major constituent party of the RPCR upon its creation in 1978 was the EDS. Formed in 1972 by Senator Henri Lafleur, his son Jacques Lafleur and Roger Laroque, the EDS was a conservative party which enjoyed electoral support mainly from Nouméa. The EDS has been described as an upholder of Nouméan bourgeois conservatism,⁵ and the RPCR has largely continued in this vein.

Despite Dick Ukeiwé's 1983 statement that "Nous [le RPCR] voulons le maximum de décentralisation et de déconcentration..."⁶, there was little evidence of initiatives by the RPCR to decentralise New Caledonia's Nouméan-centred economy and administration prior to 1988. A decade after the RPCR's formation, Nouméa remained in 1988 the focal point of a highly centralised economy:

Hégémonique, Nouméa étouffe et écrase le monde rural...Pas de valorisation des productions locales, ni transformation, ni distribution; pas d'outillage, d'ateliers, d'artisanat; pas de travaux, d'équipement, pas même une vraie route transversale pour relier les différentes régions; pas de crédit rural, pas de formation. Mais un

¹ Op. cit. Connell pp.362-363.

² Ibid.

³ Le Monde 13/6/89 p.9.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Clark: Autonomy, Integration, Development: Elections in New Caledonia 1979-1982 p.22.

⁶ Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes 5/10/83 op. cit. AFC p.54.

découragement systématique des productions locales par des importations concurrentielles.¹

Alain Christnacht notes that the import monopoly held by a handful of companies like Ballande,² the Société Barreau and the SCIE-Prisunic, has discouraged the development of local production.³ This Nouméan economic predominance is not of the RPCR's creation, but the party has done little to lessen it. Certain important members of the RPCR who were not originally from the EDS have accepted its Nouméan concerns. Jean Lèques, who as leader of the MLC joined the RPCR in 1978 with a record of advocacy of economic and administrative decentralisation, has not actively pursued those goals in the 1980s. His position as the former RPCR President of the South, and as Mayor of Nouméa since 1985 partly explains his change in priorities.⁴ A concern primarily for Nouméa has been the predominant one within the RPCR, not unreasonably considering that within Nouméa lies over 70% of the RPCR's support.

Of the former EDS leaders, it was Jacques Lafleur who played the dominant role in the RPCR, with Laroque as the party's elder statesman until his death in 1985. Jacques Lafleur was an important force within the RPCR and he channelled substantial amounts of capital from his business interests into the party. Four fifths of his SMSP, and two properties in Sologne were sold to furnish the RPCR with funds.⁵ In 1984, Lafleur spent on average 30,000 French francs every day hiring helicopters to service broussard farms and villages isolated by the FLNKS.⁶

Lafleur's financial "empire" as it has been termed⁷ plays an significant part in New Caledonia's economy. In 1988 Lafleur held investments in 21 different companies. His most prominent business ventures include the establishment of the Novotel Surf Hotel and the Casino Royal in Anse Vata, and the Corail supermarket chain. Lafleur until 1989 also had a controlling interest in the Territory's only daily newspaper, Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes, run by his nephew Frédéric.⁸ Lafleur's substantial business interests have drawn considerable adverse comment from both left and right. A common assumption is that Lafleur's political conservatism is motivated more by consideration for the protection of his personal financial "empire" rather than for the wider loyalist interests of the Caldoches. There is no evidence to confirm this assumption.

Such cynicism over Lafleur's priorities also exists within the RPCR. Henri Leleu, the RPCR's Secretary-General, was expelled from the party in September 1985 for his personal animosity over Lafleur's motives. Until he was accepted back into the RPCR in April 1988, Leleu conducted "une guérille personnelle sans concessions, contre M. Lafleur."⁹ In 1987 Leleu, as leader of the centrist party RC, comprised of disaffected RPCR supporters, said of Lafleur: "Jacques Lafleur est un homme intelligent, mais il a trouvé dans son berceau, à la fois l'argent et le pouvoir. C'est un enfant gâté, volontiers despotique."¹⁰ Leleu's personal attack was based on the assumption that Lafleur's success resulted from his inheritance of all his father's wealth and power. This assumption is not totally correct. Only 5% of Lafleur's investments in 1988 were inherited from his father: his house in Nouméa, and the Foch building where

¹ Besset p.97; cf. p.11.

² In which Roger Laroque was the director and a major shareholder. See Connell p.150.

³ Christnacht p.102.

⁴ BIPA White File 18/11/84; 4/10/85; Le Monde 17-18/4/88 p.8.

⁵ Le Point 19/12/88 p.84.

⁶ Ibid. p.83.

⁷ See ibid.

⁸ Ibid. p.81.

⁹ Le Monde 5/4/88 p.18.

¹⁰ L'Événement du jeudi 10-16/9/87 p.14.

the RPCR has its Nouméan offices.¹ Most of Lafleur's financial "empire" and certainly his political status within the RPCR were established as a result of his own efforts.

Lafleur's despotic image is one that he has never entirely been able to dispel. This is despite active measures taken like his November 1988 defamation suit against the FN Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Stirbois for his remark that Lafleur was the "parrain d'une mafia d'affairistes".² For his opponents, Lafleur is a despotic godfather figure whose direction of the RPCR is conducted for the benefit of his own financial interests. This attitude even has some currency amongst RPCR members. As an anonymous RPCR supporter from Koné commented in 1988: "Ici, pour certains au RPCR, c'est le fric d'abord, la France après."³ Lafleur has been accused of stacking the party's hierarchy with his personal friends, business associates and relatives, for example his nephew Philippe, head of the RPCR's personnel section.⁴ He has also been accused of extending the RPCR's interests beyond politics, using its influence on the Territorial administration to legislate to its own ends and to appoint RPCR members or associates into administrative positions. Besset writes of the RPCR: "Son influence s'étend à l'ensemble de la société, à tel point qu'il est identifié à l'Etat."⁵

Conclusive proof of these practices is not abundant yet there does exist at least one well-documented case which confirms the accusations of Justin Guillemard and other RPCR opponents concerning RPCR corruption and cronyism. This is the administration of ADRAF by RPCR officials between 1986 and 1988 concerning which François Asselineau, the French Inspector-General of Finances, released a report in September 1989.

At the centre of what Guy Georges, the FN(NC) Secretary-General in 1987, described as "un scandale permanent"⁶ was Denis Milliard. Milliard, formerly an RPCR representative in the Territorial Assembly, was noted for his drafting of the 1985 Milliard Plan, a bill designed to combat youth unemployment. The RPCR was accused of using this Plan to employ young Wallisians for its security branch.⁷ In 1986, after the Chirac administration's disbanding of the Office foncier or Lands Office, and their creation of ADRAF, Milliard was appointed as ADRAF's Director-General. Until 1988, when the second Mitterrand administration replaced Milliard, ADRAF was a major cause of political dissatisfaction for the FLNKS. Of 717 Melanesian land claims lodged with ADRAF between 1986 and 1988 only 36 were approved.⁸ Caring little for the political sensitivity of his office, Milliard favoured only private Melanesian land ownership and he totally dismissed tribal land claims: "La revendication clanique, c'est de la poudre à perlimpinpin juridique." Amongst those Melanesians to whom he granted private land ownership were loyalist RPCR supporters at Voh and Thio.⁹

More typically, Caldoche RPCR supporters benefited from ADRAF decisions. In 1987 Guillemard described ADRAF as "un carrefour qui se développe seulement au profit des copains."¹⁰ Asselineau claimed nearly one third of the properties ADRAF purchased from Caldoches were overvalued.¹¹ Jacques Lafleur himself was implicated in these land purchases and their resale at undervalued prices. In March 1987 ADRAF purchased a 5,900ha block of land from Lafleur's domain at Ouaco at a price equivalent

¹ *Le Point* 19/12/88 p.83.

² *Le Monde* 1/11/88 p.8.

³ *Ibid.* 4/5/88 p.44.

⁴ Besset p.44.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Le Monde* 12/9/87 p.8.

⁷ Connell p.353.

⁸ *Le Monde* 22/9/89 p.10.

⁹ *Ibid.* 12/9/87 p.8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Le Monde* 22/9/89 p.10.

to 40% of the Agency's budget.¹ Another ADRAF purchase of a 159ha block of land from Lafleur at Kaala-Gomen on 2 February 1988 was fast-tracked, undervalued by 50% for resale, and then purchased again on the same day by René Marlier, a local landowner.²

Other recipients of ADRAF land were Maurice Mitride, one of the Hienghène ambushers,* and Serge Vanhalle, a member of the RPCR's security section.† Mitride sold his Hienghène property to ADRAF for 42% above its market value, then purchased a 2ha block of land, undervalued 50% by ADRAF, in the safer surroundings of Mont Dore. Serge Vanhalle also purchased a property undervalued 50% by ADRAF at La Foa in 1987.³ Auguste Parawi-Reybas, an RPCR Territorial Councillor, purchased an 8ha property at Houailou for 252,000 F CFP. The same block of land had originally been purchased by the Office foncier in 1985 for 400,000 F CFP. 37% of ADRAF's land sales between 1986 and 1988 were in the communes of Bourail and La Foa. Not a remarkable fact in itself, an added dimension arises when Milliard's participation in local body politics at Bourail is taken into account, along with the presence of his Assistant Director Philippe Gomes at La Foa. In the same 1986-1988 period, four blocks of land were sold to ADRAF employees and twelve blocks of land to relatives of ADRAF employees.⁴

Following the takeover of the Agency by metropolitan administrators on 13 June 1988, the new High Commissioner Bernard Grasset annulled 60 land deeds distributed by ADRAF since 1986, several of which were distributed just one day before the administrative changeover.⁵ Lafleur's protestations over this decision did not diminish the damage done to the RPCR's reputation by its involvement in ADRAF. The corruption revealed, involving high-level members of the RPCR from Lafleur down to prominent but less significant party associates like Mitride and Vanhalle, tarnished the RPCR's name. It also served to confirm Guillemard's accusations concerning the RPCR as a party of "copains".

The Matignon Accords

With the RPCR's cosignature of the Matignon Accords with the FLNKS on 26 June 1988, metropolitan French perceptions of the RPCR were considerably modified. In the atmosphere of reconciliation involved the belief arose that the RPCR was not as intransigent as it had been in the past. Praise was given to Jacques Lafleur from the most unlikely quarters. The French Socialist Prime Minister Michel Rocard said of him: "M. Lafleur est un homme honnête et droit. Et en plus il est protestant!"⁶ Leaving religion aside, the conclusions of François Asselineau's investigations concerning ADRAF in September 1989 later cast doubts on the depth of Lafleur's integrity. Such doubts were also expressed in 1988 by the extreme right in New Caledonia, who accused Lafleur of capitulating to the FLNKS and to Mitterrand in signing the Accords. Just what motives were involved, and the implications of the Matignon Accords for the RPCR, will be discussed below.

In explaining why Lafleur signed the Matignon Accords against some opposition from extremist members within the RPCR, it should be pointed out that his emphasis on the RPCR's goals differs somewhat from that of outsiders like Besset and Coulon.* For Lafleur, unlike Besset, opposition to Kanak independence is not the

¹ Ibid. 12/9/87 p.8.

² Ibid. 22/9/89 p.10.

* Cf. above p.14.

† Cf. below p.49. Vanhalle is the husband of Marie-José Vanhalle.

³ *Le Monde* 22/9/89 p.10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. 27/8/88 p.22.

* See above p.28.

fundamental aim of the RPCR. At the time of the FLNKS's Territorial Elections boycott in November 1984, Lafleur spoke in broader terms concerning the objectives of the RPCR: "La premier, ramener la paix dans ce pays...; et deuxièmement recréer la prospérité économique."[†] 1

For Lafleur opposition to Kanak independence, whilst being undoubtedly important to the RPCR, was a subsidiary component of these two broader goals. The RPCR's refusal of Kanak independence was due to its recognition of association with France as a necessary precondition to continued peace and prosperity in New Caledonia. The RPCR's manifesto for the November 1984 Territorial Elections stressed that economic prosperity would be encouraged by free enterprise, the support of private property,[§] agricultural development and Territorial self-sufficiency in food. Peace was to be encouraged by the integration of Melanesians into Caldoche society. Specifically this was to be achieved through improved educational opportunities and generally through the encouragement of individual freedom.²

For the RPCR in 1984, the FLNKS's independence aims were synonymous with neither peace nor economic prosperity. The FLNKS was regarded as being anti-democratic in its boycott of the November 1984 Territorial Elections. It was thought that Kanak independence would lead New Caledonia into political anarchy and economic collapse.[¥] Jeannine Bouteille, in an AFC propaganda leaflet air-dropped into Melanesian rural areas, compared New Caledonia's supposed fate under independence with that of Africa's less fortunate independent nations. Included was a picture of a healthy black baby described as the inhabitant of "la colonie française", alongside a malnourished infant portrayed as the product of "l'indépendance raciste".³ In 1985 Paitel portrayed Kanak independence as an action courting social and economic disaster and a reversion to tribal primitivism.⁴ In 1985, Lafleur too promoted the proposition that members of the FLNKS had no interest in peace, but were only capable of violent disruption and destruction:

Quand on voit à Thio M. Machoro mettre le canon d'un fusil contre la tête d'une femme enceinte de huit mois et obliger le mari à manger des aliments sur lesquels il pisse, en menaçant la femme, vous appelez ça comment? La démocratie? La Liberté? ⁵

Regardless of the level of reliability of such details, for Lafleur they did not bode well for New Caledonia's future independence.

By 1988, circumstances had changed. In addition to Tjibaou's more moderate stance and his expressed willingness to search for a peaceful resolution to Melanesian claims, Lafleur accepted that Tjibaou was genuine in this resolve. Lafleur commented of Tjibaou in July 1988: "C'est un autre homme dont le langage raisonnable a été apprécié. Il a la responsabilité de la paix et celle de rétablir la démocratie au sein du FLNKS."⁶

For Lafleur, who in 1985 saw Tjibaou as the leader of a marginal, anti-democratic group,^{*} Tjibaou was by 1988 the leader of a legitimate political party. Lafleur's recognition of Tjibaou partly led to an opening of dialogue with the FLNKS. Lafleur claimed on 25 June 1988 that this was not merely his desire but also that of the RPCR in general: "Le RPCR a été d'accord pour dialoguer...chacun est d'accord pour

[†] Or "la défense du capitalisme" as Coulon describes it: Coulon p.148.

¹ *Le Monde* 18/11/84 p.10.

[§] Cf. Bouteille and Ukeiwé above on p.21.

² Connell p.324.

[¥] See Ukeiwé above on p.30.

³ AFC p.147.

⁴ Paitel pp.207, 208.

⁵ *Le Monde* 6-7/1/85 p.1.

⁶ *Ibid.* 29/7/88 p.6.

^{*} See above p.29.

dialoguer, mais chacun n'acceptera n'importe quoi."¹ This statement was made only a month after RPCR militants demanded that Pons order the arrest of Tjibaou, Léopold Jorédié and Yeiwené Yeiwené and outlaw the FLNKS during the Ouvéa hostage incident.²

Such militancy does not dissolve in a matter of weeks. It is questionable whether Lafleur did have the total support of the RPCR at that stage. Rather, Lafleur's personal motives were of greater importance. He claimed during the negotiation of the Matignon Accords in Paris that his ill-health had prompted his decision to negotiate with the FLNKS. Suffering from a heart condition, Lafleur realised he was nearing the end of his career: "M. Rocard, lorsque je me couche le soir, je me demande si je vais me réveiller le lendemain."³ Lafleur wished that as his political legacy some lasting consensus might be achieved between the FLNKS and the RPCR. He was also fearful that the next political generation might cause the New Caledonian political situation to deteriorate further: "Il faut faire vite. Ceux qui prendront notre place ne se connaissent pas."⁴

Alongside this concern for posterity, Lafleur realised that with the re-election of President Mitterrand in May 1988 and his presence in government alongside a PS administration until at least 1993, the French political climate had changed. The RPCR was no longer in the privileged position it enjoyed under the Chirac government and would have to present a more conciliatory image to the Rocard government.

After Mitterrand's re-election, Lafleur reiterated his dissatisfaction with the Pons Statute. He stated on 1 June 1988 that the Pons Statute needed a replacement. At the same time he admitted the extent of New Caledonia's ethnic divisions and the necessity to bridge them through a greater sharing of political power. This was a marked change from his previous position that the RPCR alone, as the voice of the majority, was in the best position to decide New Caledonia's interests:

Il faut que les responsabilités soient partagées, il faut que chacun des opposants trouve son équilibre dans son aire de responsabilités, il faut que ces responsabilités soient larges, il faut que l'Etat donne toutes leurs chances à ces zones et à ces hommes de réussir.⁵

No longer did Lafleur believe that the FLNKS could be disregarded politically due to its minority support and its peripheral control of the Territory.* By 1988 he regarded the mutual recognition of the FLNKS and the RPCR as essential if future peace was to be maintained in New Caledonia. If not, incidents like those on Ouvéa in 1988 would continue and perhaps even spread to the point of civil war:

Nous avons le choix entre le bain de sang et la recherche d'une solution. Je ne suis pas pour le bain de sang. Ensuite, si la discussion commence, il faut que nous admettions les uns et les autres deux réalités incontournables: il faut qu'ils [les indépendantistes] reconnaissent que nous [les loyalistes] existons, que nous ne nous en irons jamais, et que nous sommes largement majoritaires; et nous, nous reconnaissons qu'il y a dans la communauté mélanésienne, des indépendantistes, et qu'ils sont incontournables...un mauvais accord vaut mieux qu'une bonne guerre civile parce qu'il n'y a jamais de bonne guerre civile...⁶

Whilst exhibiting a changed attitude to the FLNKS, it should be noted that Lafleur's signature of the 1988 Matignon Accords was consistent with his 1984 statement concerning peace and prosperity as the RPCR's primary goals. It was

¹ Le Monde 25/5/88 p.11.

² Ibid. 28/4/88 p.40.

³ Le Nouvel Observateur 24-30/6/88 p.41.

⁴ Ibid. 1-7/6/88 p.28.

⁵ Le Monde 2/6/88 p.15.

* See above p.32.

⁶ Le Figaro 3/6/88 op. cit. Le Monde 4/6/88 p.7.

Lafleur's hope that the Accords' ten year development period between 1988 and 1998 prior to a Territorial self-determination referendum would permit the economic transformation of the RPCR-controlled Southern Province:

Nous [le RPCR], nous allons, je l'espère, transformer notre région en une sorte de paradis économique et social, culturel et humain. Nous avons d'immenses projets pour faire en dix ans de notre région la vraie vitrine de la France dans le Pacifique dans l'an 2000.¹

Besset pointed out that in conceding recognition to the FLNKS and its "aire de responsabilités" under the Matignon Accords, Lafleur ceded it "une partie du pays sans intérêt économique."² Although the North and Loyalty Island Provinces will receive regional development funds they are unlikely to equal the modernity of the RPCR-controlled South. Lafleur dismissed these considerations in November 1988:

La crainte de Tjibaou réside dans cette constatation que le Sud a de l'avance par rapport au Nord. C'est vrai. Mais dans les faits, cela devrait aller plus vite là où il y a du retard que là où l'on doit construire sur ce qui existe déjà. Si on fait un plan de développement intelligent, les potentialités du Nord sont plus importants.³

Concerning development, existing capacities are more important than future potentialities. Even with preferential levels of funding it is unlikely that in 1998 the North and the Loyalty Islands will have achieved the South's level of development in 1989, still less that of Lafleur's projected "paradis économique". The South has within its confines Tontouta International Airport, the Yaté hydroelectric dam, the mining centres of Thio and Kouaoua, and the rural centre of Bourail, in addition to Nouméa with its port, commerce, administration, and large workforce.

The South is likely to remain the most economically prosperous and advanced region of New Caledonia by 1998. As Pierre Maresca, the RPCR's Secretary-General, noted of the Matignon Accords: "Il assure le contrôle du province démographiquement et économiquement la plus important au RPCR, de même que la majorité absolue au congrès du territoire."⁴

Maresca's comments on the Matignon Accords, made in a letter to François Léotard in October 1988 merit further attention. Maresca argued that the Accords were a substantial victory for the RPCR:

A l'évidence, Tjibaou et le FLNKS cherchaient une sortie politique honorable, et ils l'ont trouvée. Mais ils n'ont rien obtenu de plus, globalement, que ce que leur concédait le statut Pons, qui leur aurait permis de contrôler deux régions sur quatre et de disposer au sein du conseil exécutif d'une minorité de blocage.* Sur tous les points d'ordre spécifiquement politique - corps électoral, découpage des provinces, nombre de représentants pour chacune d'elles au congrès, répartition des crédits de fonctionnement - qui ont été les pierres d'achoppement des discussions, ils ont finalement accepté nos points de vue...Enfin, la question du corps électoral révèle implicitement la plus importante concession politique du FLNKS, qui, en acceptant pour la première fois que les Calédoniens de toutes ethnies votent en 1998, abandonne sa revendication d'indépendance canaque qui était basée sur la composition d'un corps électoral uniquement canaque.⁵

The FLNKS's abandonment of its "victims of history" criteria for the 1998 self-determination referendum was a marked change from its earlier position. The FLNKS's boycott of the September 1987 self-determination referendum was partly due to the RPCR's refusal to recognise this issue. Having conceded this point, the FLNKS is less likely to gain a majority vote in favour of independence in the 1998 referendum.

¹ *Le Monde* 29/6/88 p.9.

² Besset p.127.

³ *Le Monde* 29/11/88 p.11.

⁴ *Ibid.* 18/10/88 p.8.

* Cf. above p.31.

⁵ *Le Monde* 18/10/88 p.8.

Assuming population trends of the 1980s continue, it has been estimated that only 44.5% of the New Caledonian electorate will be Melanesian in 1998.¹ As was demonstrated in Chapter One, by no means are all Melanesian voters to be considered in favour of independence. It is the RPCR's hope that given a ten year development period prior to the plebiscite, more Melanesians will be convinced of the material advantages of continued association with France. Overall, the RPCR is confident that the 1998 referendum will fall in favour of continued links with France. Maresca wrote that "toutes les projections effectuées sur dix ans révèlent que nous [le RPCR] serons largement majoritaires en 1998 et que le destin de la Nouvelle-Calédonie sera celui que voudra la majorité actuelle [le RPCR] et non le FLNKS."²

Not all New Caledonian loyalists were as confident as the RPCR's leadership regarding the Matignon Accords. Despite Lafleur's June 1988 assertion that he had RPCR party support,^{*} Lafleur later mentioned in Paris on 6 July 1988 that like Tjibaou he too would have problems convincing extremists of the worth of the Accords: "Je rencontrerai également des difficultés. Il faudra convaincre la population, les électeurs RPCR."³

Lafleur totally failed to convince the extreme right. In July 1988 the RPCR-dominated Territorial Congress voted 35 to 11 in favour of the Matignon Accords. Those who voted against supporting the Accords included all the FC and FN(NC) Councillors present.⁴ In May 1988 both parties had refused to open any dialogue with Christian Blanc's mission to New Caledonia on behalf of the Rocard government. For Guy Georges, the head of the FN(NC) in 1988, dealing with PS representatives was out of the question. The mere prospect of having Mitterrand as the President of France for a second term was outrageous: "la Nouvelle-Calédonie a plongé dans l'horreur." Attempting to negotiate with his representatives was untenable due to past PS efforts to lead New Caledonia into independence through the Lemoine and Pisani Statutes: "Non seulement il [Mitterrand] nous méprise, mais il nous prend pour des cons."⁵

Justin Guillemard also bitterly opposed the RPCR's "honteuse capitulation" and "pseudo-dialogue" as he described it before the Territorial Congress on 20 September 1988. Haranguing the RPCR Councillors present, Guillemard claimed the Matignon Accords had "partagé le pouvoir politique et économique entre les politico-affairistes [le RPCR], d'une part, et les assassins terroristes [le FLNKS] d'autre part, pour supposément dix ans, laps de temps qui vous permettra encore de réaliser quelques bonnes et juteuses affaires!"

It became clear in the aftermath of the Matignon Accords that RPCR loyalist voters too were not yet convinced of the need for dialogue with the FLNKS. Despite the RPCR's public support of the Matignon Accords, in the 6 November 1988 French referendum on the Accords five Southern communes voted overwhelmingly against them. Not only did these five communes include Dumbéa and Bourail, centres of RPCR dissent where Bernard Marant[†] and Justin Guillemard respectively are prominent, but also Nouméa, the centre of the RPCR's support. In Nouméa 63.7% of the voters said "no" to the Matignon Accords. 56.37% did so at Mont Dore, 53.02% at La Foa, 79.33% at Farino, 65.87% at Dumbéa and 56.31% at Bourail.⁶ Alain Rollat commented of these figures: "M. Lafleur, éminent signataire des accords de Matignon, n'apparaît plus représentatif dans son propre domaine électoral."⁷

¹ See *Le Point* 14/11/88 p.27.

² *Le Monde* 18/10/88 p.8.

^{*} See above p.38.

³ *Le Monde* 6/7/88 p.8.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Le Monde* 28/5/88 p.13.

[†] Marant is the mayor of Dumbéa; a former RPCR councillor who left the party in 1987.

⁶ *Le Monde* 8/11/88 p.8.

⁷ Ibid.

Lafleur steadfastly denied that he had lost the support of his electorate over the Matignon Accords in November 1988: "Des milliers de lettres et des centaines de coups de téléphone m'ont convaincu que le vote n'était pas dirigé contre moi, je suis serein."¹ Lafleur drew a fine distinction in claiming that the loyalists who voted "no" were not rejecting the Matignon Accords but rather the need to hold a referendum on the Accords. At the same time he blamed the FN(NC) for leading RPCR supporters astray: "ils [le FN] ont profité de la naïveté des gens pour les affoler pour que des conflits éclatent."²

Following the 6 November 1988 referendum, it appeared that the RPCR might be losing its loyalist majority support to parties of the extreme right over its signature of the Matignon Accords.

The FN(NC) and its extremist challenge to the RPCR

Of New Caledonia's loyalist parties, the FN(NC) in 1988 stood second in popularity to the RPCR. The party was formed in May 1984 with the support of Jean-Marie Le Pen's metropolitan French FN. Initially led by Pierre Guillemard, the party began with only a few dozen members but rapidly gained wider support. In the June 1984 Elections for French representatives to the European Parliament, the FN obtained 16% of the New Caledonian vote, exceeding the 11% support it gained in metropolitan France.³

The FN(NC)'s voter support has, like the RPCR's, consistently centered on Nouméa. In the November 1984 Territorial Assembly Elections the FN(NC), under the name PFL, obtained 1,369 votes in Nouméa. These votes formed 57% of its total vote of 2,379, spread over all three Regions of the Grande Terre. The FN(NC) obtained 77% of its total support in the South. Support outside the South was negligible, a mere 376 votes in the West and 165 votes in the East. No FN(NC) electoral list was presented in the Loyalty Islands probably due to a combination of the party's racist image and the Islands' Melanesian population. Overall the FN(NC) obtained 6.1% of the Territorial vote, a figure disproportionately large due to the FLNKS's election boycott. Roger Galliot, the FN(NC) Mayor of Thio, was elected into the Territorial Assembly. Despite his participation in the party, only 65 votes were cast for the FN(NC) in Thio, compared with 353 for the RPCR.⁴

If only by association with its parent party, the FN(NC) stood to the right of the RPCR's more mainstream conservatism. The FN(NC)'s formation in 1984 was a consequence of New Caledonia's increasing political polarisation over the issue of independence. Unlike the RPCR's largely autonomous relationship with the RPR, the FN(NC)'s status is one of subordinacy to the FN. Le Pen's decisions are an important influence on the FN(NC). A good example concerns Néoéré's resignation as the FN(NC)'s Secretary-General in January 1986, after the circulation of a letter by Le Pen questioning the presence of a Melanesian in such a prominent position. The FN(NC) appointed Néoéré in 1984 partly in an attempt to dispel the FN's racist reputation. Connell suggests Le Pen's desire to expel Néoéré was not due to his inability as a Secretary-General, but was rather a result of Le Pen's own racism.⁵ The RPR does not exercise such a degree of control over the RPCR. Chirac would be unlikely to urge the dismissal of a member of the RPCR's hierarchy, still less have such wishes fulfilled. At times, Lafleur has distanced the RPCR from the RPR. A recent example was his disassociation from the RPR's 1988 internal split over support of the Matignon

¹ *Le Monde* 9/11/88 p.8.

² *Ibid.*

³ Connell p.314.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp.323, p.327.

⁵ Connell p.370.

Accords.¹ The FN(NC) does not enjoy such a degree of autonomy from the FN and has followed the political line of its parent party in opposing the Matignon Accords.

From its inception, the FN(NC) has vigorously opposed the FLNKS and has criticised the RPCR for its allegedly weak opposition to Kanak indépendantistes. In January 1985, Roger Galliot accused the FLNKS of being in league with the Eastern bloc: "Nos adversaires [le FLNKS] ne veulent pas une décolonisation mais un transfert de colonisation vers les pays de l'Est."² Even more remarkable was Néoéré's assertion concerning Jacques Lafleur: "Lafleur, sans le dire, est pour l'indépendance canaque socialiste."³ Like Gabriel and Kermel, Néoéré believed Lafleur was willing to sacrifice New Caledonia's links with France in order to protect his business "empire".⁴ In 1985, nothing could be further from the truth considering Lafleur's public dismissals of the FLNKS.* But in making this claim, Néoéré sought to establish the FN(NC) as a party with an identity distinct from the RPCR's mainstream conservatism and render that conservatism discreditable.

In the September 1985 Regional Elections, the FN(NC) offered only one electoral list in the South. The party's limited support obtained outside the South in the November 1984 Territorial Elections was probably the reason for this decision. Overall the FN(NC) gained 6.1% of the Territorial vote. In the South once again the overwhelming majority of the FN(NC)'s electoral support came from Nouméa, notably from the suburbs of Anse Vata and Faubourg Blanchot.⁵ 75.4% (3,970 votes) of the party's total support of 5,263 votes were from Nouméa. As a result of this increased support, the FN(NC) gained three seats in the South, a consolidation of its earlier Nouméan support.⁶ The FN(NC)'s main competition in the South was not the FLNKS, which only obtained 7.5% of the votes there (2,820 votes), but the RPCR with its 70.6% of the Southern vote (26,615 votes).⁷ The FN(NC) aimed to attract European voters away from the RPCR, rather than Melanesians, for whom the party's image held very little appeal.

In the Central Region the situation was different. The FN(NC) initially offered an electoral list there too, but this was withdrawn on Le Pen's orders following his arrival in the Territory days before the elections. Le Pen decided to subordinate the FN(NC)'s interests in the Central Region to the greater good of the wider loyalist cause. His fear was that the FN(NC)'s presence in this marginal Region would split the loyalist vote and allow the FLNKS to gain a majority.⁸ Le Pen's decision did not lead to the RPCR gaining a decisive advantage as the FLNKS gained a Regional majority of 5,434 votes against the RPCR's 5,003 votes.⁹

Le Pen's decision concerning the Central Region marked the beginning of further co-operation with the RPCR during the March 1986 French Elections. The FN(NC) combined with the RPCR to contest the elections with a joint electoral list. It is uncertain whether this action was indicative more of increased RPCR conservatism or decreased FN(NC) extremism. Whichever, the elections displayed that the two parties did have a certain amount of common ground between them.¹⁰

The FN(NC) continued to increase its electoral support in 1988, a year during which it became increasingly hostile to the RPCR over that party's signature of the Matignon Accords. The 24 April 1988 Regional Elections, marred by an FLNKS active

¹ *Le Monde* 13/10/88 p.7.

² *Ibid.* 30/1/85 p.8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See Gabriel and Kermel p.208.

* See above pp.29,32.

⁵ Connell p.359.

⁶ *Op. cit. ibid.* p.362.

⁷ Connell p.362.

⁸ *Ibid.* p.359.

⁹ *Op. cit. ibid.* p.362.

¹⁰ Connell p.370.

boycott which forced the closure of 38 polling offices,¹ were the FN(NC)'s most successful elections. For the first time the party ran lists in all four of New Caledonia's Regions. In the South the FN(NC) gained 23.63% of the vote (7,329 votes), sufficient to give it a total of five seats.² The party also polled well in the Western Region, gaining 28.59% of the Regional vote there (3,275 votes). Three seats were won as a result of this support.³ The FN(NC)'s Western success can partially be attributed to the presence of Justin Guillemard at the head of the party's list there. In Bourail he attracted 41.76% of the commune's votes, as opposed to the trifling 1.8% (or 35 votes) obtained there by the FN(NC) in November 1984, before Guillemard's involvement with the party.⁴ The absence of the FLNKS from the elections was also an important contribution in permitting broussards to vote for the FN(NC) without concern for splitting the loyalist vote. Rollat wrote of the FN(NC)'s overall electoral success that "le centre de gravité du courant conservateur territorial se déplace vers l'extrême droite sous l'influence du Front national, en progrès spectaculaire."⁵

Jacques Lafleur's September 1987 statement that "nous [le RPCR] allons écarter les extrémistes" was made to sound decidedly hollow in 1988.⁶ Following the RPCR's setback over the 6 November 1988 referendum* it was Guy Georges's belief that exactly the opposite would take place: "Nous [le FN] demandons que le gouvernement remette en cause les accords de Matignon, ramène tout le monde autour de la table avec la présence des forces loyalistes non-RPCR pour engager une renégociation."⁷ Instead of the RPCR sweeping away the FN(NC), it was the latter's contention that their minority support had expanded to the extent that the RPCR would be forced to make room. After the 6 November referendum it appeared that the FN(NC) Councillor Bernard Herpin's insistence that the Accords had surrendered New Caledonia to the "folie meurtrière du FLNKS" was widely agreed with by the loyalist electorate.⁸

For all the confidence expressed by Georges regarding the FN(NC)'s electoral successes of 1988, and the uncomfortable position those gains placed the RPCR in, they were not to continue. Factional disputes overtook the FN(NC). Bernard Marant joined forces with the FN(NC) dissident Matelot Dubois to form CD. The cause of Dubois' departure was reputedly a brawl with Camille Fournier, an FN(NC) spokesman and local novelist.⁹ Marant led the CD's Southern list in the 11 June 1989 Provincial Elections, while Dubois led the party's list in the North. CD polled 5.15% of the Territorial electorate, with 7.02% of the Southern vote (2,751 votes), 2.44% in the North (361 votes) and 1.25% in the Loyalty Islands (107 votes). CD gained two seats in the South.¹⁰

While CD gained two Southern seats, the FN(NC) lost two seats there, leaving it a total of three in that Province. The FN(NC) gained 9.85% of the Southern vote (3,860 votes). In the North it obtained only 2.32% of the vote (344 votes). The party's total level of support was 6.72% of the Territorial vote (4,204 votes).¹¹ This marked a return to pre-1988 support levels and the FN(NC) reverted to being an electorally marginal party with support confined largely to Nouméa. The FN(NC)'s inability to

¹ *Le Monde* 26/4/88 p.36.

² *Ibid.* 27/4/88 p.13; 26/4/88 p.36.

³ *Ibid.* 26/4/88 p.36.

⁴ *Ibid.*; *op. cit.* Connell p.326.

⁵ *Le Monde* 26/4/88 p.36.

⁶ *Ibid.* 16/9/87 p.9.

* See above pp.40-41.

⁷ *Le Monde* 8/11/88 p.8.

⁸ *Ibid.* 22/9/88 p.10.

⁹ *Ibid.* 10/6/89 p.14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 13/6/89 p.9.

¹¹ *Le Monde* 13/6/89 p.9.

hold its ranks together, and its failure to expand its support by forming a coalition with the FC led to this setback.¹

The RPCR's mobilisation for the 11 June 1989 Provincial Elections was another reason for the FN(NC)'s diminished support. The RPCR made a concerted effort to canvas support during the elections, unlike the 6 November 1988 referendum preceding which the party kept a low profile in order not to embarrass the RPR.² Jacques Lafleur devoted his attention to recapturing support in Southern communes like Farino where opposition to the Matignon Accords expressed in the November referendum was high.³ The FN(NC)'s doubts over the strength of the RPCR's support were dispelled when the RPCR gained 44.46% of the Territorial vote (27,777 votes) in the June Elections.⁴ The loyalist electorate had closed ranks behind the RPCR.

The FC - marginal extremism

The FC has obtained poor electoral results compared with the FN. As a minority party of the extreme right the FC is however worth examining due to its independent status. It is in this respect that the FC differs from the FN(NC). As shall be shown, whilst this independence has allowed the FC to follow its own path, that path has involved many difficulties.

The FC was formed in 1982 by Justin Guillemard who was at that time an RPCR representative in the Territorial Assembly. Guiart has sought to use Guillemard's link with the RPCR to imply that the FC was founded as an extremist front for the RPCR, but this is doubtful considering Guillemard's later outspoken criticisms of the RPCR.⁵ Guillemard's allegiance to the RPCR has been far from unswerving and he has shown little hesitation to oppose the party on certain issues from both within and outside its ranks.

Guillemard founded the FC as a breakaway party from the PNC. Established in January 1982 by Georges Chatenay, with the support of Guillemard, Roger Galliot and Henri Morini, the PNC was a forceful assertion of Caldoche nationalism.⁶ The party advocated a Rhodesian form of white minority rule for New Caledonia. By the end of 1982 Guillemard had successfully won over the PNC's followers after founding the FC.⁷

Unlike the FN(NC) with its predominantly Nouméan support, under Guillemard the FC combined broussard interests with those of recent métro arrivals and pieds-noirs.⁸ Guillemard's personal concerns as a broussard and his following in Bourail assured that the FC would not be solely a Nouméan party. His work with RURALE centered on opposition to sales of privately-owned broussard property as a result of Melanesian land claims.⁹ Similarly the FC strongly opposed land reforms, with threats of direct action against the FI.¹⁰ The FC opposed independence, and proposed that New Caledonia should receive the less autonomous status of a French Overseas

¹ *Le Monde* 12-13/3/89 p.11.

² *Ibid.* 16-17/10/88 p.6.

³ *Ibid.* 12-13/3/89 p.11.

⁴ *Ibid.* 13/6/89 p.9.

⁵ Guiart p.VIII; cf. above pp.13, 40.

⁶ Chatenay is a lawyer who has been active in New Caledonian politics since the 1950s. He is notable for his 1957 founding of the RS and his later involvement in the UDNC, a coalition formed in 1968 with Roger Laroque and Henri Lafleur: See Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff: *The French Pacific Islands: French Polynesia and New Caledonia* pp.305, 327.

⁷ Connell p.305.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Ward p.55.

¹⁰ Connell p.306.

Department.¹ Another ideological strand was the FC's link with Roger Ludeau's Association des amis des Etats-Unis, a social group with a self-estimated 10,000 members by 1985.²

For uncertain reasons, Guillemard left the FC in 1984 and rejoined the RPCR, where he sat uncomfortably until his expulsion in 1987.³ Guillemard took his Bourail supporters with him. Claude Sarran assumed the leadership of the FC and led the party in the November 1984 Territorial Elections under the name *Renouveau de l'Opposition en Calédonie* (ROC).⁴ The name was a reaction to the formation of the FLNKS; a call for a rallying of loyalist opposition to Melanesian independence. Sarran held to party policy established under Guillemard's leadership. He stressed the importance of giving New Caledonia the same administrative status as Corsica, and advocated free market economic goals, namely "déserrer le carcan administratif, afin de favoriser l'initiative privée et d'alléger la fiscalité, en supprimant notamment l'impôt sur le revenu."⁵ The FC gained substantially fewer votes in the elections than the newly established FN(NC). Sarran led an electoral list in the South alone and gained a mere 732 votes; 1.9% of the Territorial vote, itself marred by Melanesian abstentions.⁶ This was little to show for two year's presence on the New Caledonian political scene. By February 1985, the FC only had 300 members.⁷

In 1985 the FC raised its public profile and its credibility with loyalists as a result of the Thio "picnic". On 17 February 1985 the FC organised a motorcade to the FLNKS-occupied centre of Thio. Some 400 people, around 170 of whom claimed to be "refugees" from Thio, crossed the Humbolt Massif to the east coast in defiance of Edgard Pisani. In the confrontation which resulted between Melanesian FLNKS supporters from the Saint Philippo tribe and FC supporters, gendarmes dispersed the Melanesians with grenades and teargas. Several people were injured.⁸ The occasion gave Sarran the opportunity to expound his views to the metropolitan French press. Two days after the "picnic", he expressed his opinion that under the Mitterrand government "la Nouvelle-Calédonie est devenue la Pologne."⁹ Just as Poland had proven a problem area for Moscow, so too was New Caledonia proving troublesome for the Paris administration. Sarran expressed his wish that "le drame calédonien doit être le Watergate de Mitterrand", yet strenuously denied that the FC was acting outside the law:

Nous [le FC] ne sommes pas des extrémistes. Nous sommes, c'est vrai, à droite du RPCR, mais nous représentons la Calédonie profonde et nous sommes extrêmement légalistes: nous demandons simplement l'application dans le territoire des lois de la République française.¹⁰

Edgard Pisani did not share Sarran's view that the FC's members were "extrêmement légalistes" and ordered that Sarran and four other FC leaders be deported from the Territory.¹¹ The five went into hiding for several months and, after they refused an RPCR offer of safe passage to Tahiti, the RPCR publicly lent support to them. Connell suggests that the RPCR's subsequent organisation of a large Nouméan

¹ Connell p.305.

² *Le Monde* 9/3/85 p.6; Connell p.306.

³ Connell p.347; cf. above p.13.

⁴ Connell p.323.

⁵ *Le Monde* 19/2/85 p.8.

⁶ Op. cit. Connell p.327.

⁷ *Le Monde* 19/2/85 p.1.

⁸ Connell pp.347-348.

⁹ *Le Monde* 19/2/85 p.8.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.1.

¹¹ Connell p.348.

public rally in support of the FC was an attempt to garner credibility through association with Sarran.¹

Ultimately the Thio "picnic" backfired on the FC. With Sarran keeping a low profile, the party did not succeed in mobilising for the September 1985 Regional Elections. By the time of the January 1986 Municipal By-elections, the FC did gain 10% of the Nouméan vote, but the party was still far from achieving a broad loyalist support base.² This may have been the reason why Sarran later left the FC. Like Guillemard, by 1988 he was a representative for the FN(NC).³ The FN(NC)'s broader minority support permitted a better platform for the extremist views of both former FC leaders than their previous party.

With such links between the FC and the FN(NC), it is surprising the two have not formed a coalition. Both stand on similar ideological ground and have reacted in unison against certain RPCR initiatives. Prior to the September 1987 self-determination referendum, both the FC and the FN(NC) rejected the RPCR's motion to restrict voting rights to those inhabitants of New Caledonia who had resided in the Territory for three years. Both saw the decision as a weak centrist concession to the FLNKS.⁴ With regard to the Matignon Accords the FC, like the FN(NC), expressed opposition: "[l'accord] ne contient pratiquement pas de garanties pour les loyalistes [et] hypothèque l'avenir du territoire."⁵ Without a coalition of the extreme right, the FC has found itself electorally stalemated as a poor second to the FN(NC) in terms of voter support.

In the FLNKS-boycotted 24 April 1988 Regional Elections, the FC gained two seats in the South, the only Region where the party participated.⁶ The FC's total was 9.16% of the voting electorate (2,916 votes), a gain in support in comparison with the November 1984 Territorial Elections, yet still substantially less than the FN(NC)'s support.* This achievement proved to be short-lived. In the 11 June 1989 Provincial Elections, the FC's losses were heavier than the FN(NC)'s. The FC lost both of its Southern seats and gained only 4.11% of the vote there (1,611 votes). This figure translates into only 2.57% of the Territorial vote.⁷ Once again, the South was the only area where the FC offered an electoral list.

At the end of the 1980s, the FC has still failed to capture a significant share of the loyalist vote, and unless another vigorous leader like Guillemard or Sarran emerges, the FC will remain a marginal electoral second to the FN(NC). Both the FN(NC) and the FC have found that, electorally, loyalists in New Caledonia prefer to support the RPCR. As a result, these two extreme right-wing parties have yet to break out of mere fringe politics. In the future their role will continue to be that of political pressure groups to the right of the RPCR.

The "tentation ultra"

From the electoral fringe politics of the extreme right, this section concentrates on the shadowy realm of clandestine loyalist activities in New Caledonia during the 1980s. These activities have ranged from inflammatory pamphleteering and graffiti through to arson, bombings, threats and acts of physical violence against indépendantistes, the organisation of security guards and militias, arms trafficking, assassinations and paramilitary plans. In no way should it be thought that the people involved in these diverse activities are part of some greater extremist conspiracy or movement. These activities can not necessarily even be defined according to the party

¹ Connell p.348.

² Christnacht p.57.

³ See *Le Monde* 5/4/88 p.18; 25/5/88 p.11.

⁴ Ibid. 11/4/87 p.6.

⁵ Ibid. 29/6/88 p.9.

⁶ Ibid. 5/4/88 p.18.

* See above p.41.

⁷ *Le Monde* 13/6/89 p.9.

political affiliations of the individuals involved. Links with parties, mainly the RPCR, will be discussed, but proving whether individuals involved in illegal acts were doing so "under orders" or on their own initiative is difficult. Due to this vagueness, the extremist organisers of clandestine loyalist activities will be collectively described as the *tentation ultra*, a necessarily vague term for a shadowy, mainly anonymous assortment of extremist individuals.¹ Owing to the covert nature of these activities, and the frequent mythomania and exaggerations of those involved with them, these clandestine activities have been prone to overemphasis. As a political force, extremist loyalist violence in New Caledonia has not halted Kanak independence claims in the 1980s, although Connell believes it has slowed down the FLNKS's progress by creating feelings of helplessness and internal discord.²

Mention of the broussards' background of armed political activity in the 1940s and 1950s has already been made, as has mention of their organisation of milices d'autodéfense in isolated villages like Hienghène during the 1984-85 period.* Such rural militias were the first visible manifestation of an armed Caldoche reaction to the Melanesian independence movement. Marc Weitzmann describes the appearance of broussard militias in the late 1960s, formed as a reaction to the Foulards rouges.³ Such militias have usually been organised informally by mutually-acquainted members of small rural communities. The militias were not of a permanent nature but were instead temporary responses to particular threats. Like Hienghène's 1984 militia, formed as a result of Machoro's occupation of Thio and a rise in local FLNKS militancy, they were usually informally disbanded once tensions declined.⁴ As a result of their impermanent and informal nature, little hard information is available detailing the numbers involved in these bush militias, or the rural communities they were active in.

More overtly political *tentation ultra* groupings were not formed in New Caledonia until the end of the 1970s. The first of these was the MOP, formed by the pied-noir Henri Morini on 26 August 1979.⁵ In the polarised political atmosphere created in response to the Dijoud Plan, the group declared that it would keep law and order in the Territory should the French administration fail to do so.⁶ Like later groups of this genre, no details have been disclosed concerning the MOP's membership levels or the origins of its members. The MOP's main claim to notoriety resulted when one of its members, an off-duty policeman, shot Théodore Daye, a young Melanesian, on 7 January 1980. The policeman was returned to metropolitan France and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.⁷ There is no reason to believe the incident was premeditated or anything other than an unplanned, violent confrontation. It has also been suggested that the policeman was drunk at the time.⁸ The MOP did not claim responsibility and the incident did not show the group's concerns for peace and order in a favorable light. MOP's only other significant action occurred on 22 July 1982. Morini organised a group of around 60 of his followers, wearing masks and carrying clubs. The group entered the Territorial Assembly Chambers in the middle of a debate and demanded that members of the FI/ FNSC coalition resign. For his efforts Morini received a 45 day jail sentence and the personal congratulations of Roger Laroque.^{9†}

The MOP was not the only focus for extremist activity in New Caledonia in the early 1980s. New Hebrides' steps towards its declaration of independence in June 1980 turned the attention of certain loyalists to New Caledonia's closest geographical

¹ See *Le Monde* 9/7/87 p.6.

² Connell pp.354, 368.

* See above p.14.

³ Marc Weitzmann: *Nouvelle-Calédonie. Un siècle de balles perdues* p.70.

⁴ *BIPA* White File 25/11/84.

⁵ AFIKHM: *Contribution à l'histoire du pays kanak* p.96.

⁶ Connell pp.281-282.

⁷ AFIKHM p.97; Connell p.282.

⁸ AFIKHM p.97.

⁹ Connell pp.300-301.

† Morini was also involved with the formation of the PNC in January 1982. Cf. above p.44.

neighbour. It was felt that should the New Hebrides gain independence its example would serve as encouragement, and possibly as a support base, for the FI.¹ The Santo rebellion of 28 May 1980 was reported to have received material support from certain Caldoches. The gendarme assigned to investigate rumoured arms trafficking between New Caledonia and Santo, Brigade Commander Franz Cabale, was shot and killed in his Nouméan apartment on 26 November 1980. His investigations were not resumed following his death.²

Similarly, the identity of the murderer of Pierre Declercq, the Caldoche UC Secretary-General, has never been revealed. Declercq, killed on 19 September 1981, was the first politician to be murdered in New Caledonia, and his death marked the beginning of a level of political violence which spread further in the 1980s.³ Following Declercq's death, an anonymous Nouméan group called *Légitime défense* distributed a pamphlet announcing a call to arms against the FI.⁴ No link between *Légitime défense* and Declercq's murder was ever established. It is probable that the pamphlet was merely an example of extremists seizing an opportune moment to proselytise.

The November 1984-February 1986 period witnessed an escalation in the number of politically-motivated explosive and arson attacks against property: 28 incidents took place, eight of which were against the property of indépendantiste leaders.⁵ In 1985, loyalist extremist groups also multiplied. The CCACF was formed in 1985 by a group of *pieds-noirs*. Members of the group were arrested in June 1985 when the police discovered a cache of bombs and ammunition.⁶ Justin Guillemard formed his CAP in November 1985, described by him as a patriotic reservist formation. Roger Galliot of the FN(NC) set up the CACI, and the FCL marked their beginnings by blowing up Nouméa's law courts and Lands Office.⁷

None of the above groups were noted for their moderate views. In addition to being responsible for a chain letter which included a "hit" list of indépendantistes,⁸ the FCL distributed a twenty page document to prominent loyalists in 1985. Its "Appel pour l'organisation d'un mouvement actif de résistance contre l'indépendance kanake socialiste" listed various methods of harrassing and intimidating FLNKS members and sympathisers, including hate mail, abusive phone calls, vandalism and theft of property, arson and bombing. The most extreme method recommended was euphemistically described as "l'action totale (suppression de l'individu)" for which "la disparition totale sans trace (jeter le corps aux requins)" was the preferred method for disposing of any resultant corpses.⁹

For all the FCL's diatribe, such methods have not been widely adopted by New Caledonian loyalists. Guiart points out that loyalists who do favour terrorism are predominantly "...ceux qui craquent à force de participer à des conversations de bar où l'on se gargarise de la description de la façon dont on démolira les canaques gênants." Guiart concludes:

On doit juger les européens de Nouvelle-Calédonie sur leurs actions effectives et pas sur ce qu'ils disent, pour la simple raison que leurs déclarations anti-canaques, surtout après boire, sont facilement de l'ordre de l'insupportable, sans même qu'ils en soient conscients.¹⁰

¹ See Paitel for this thesis.

² Weitzmann pp.70-71.

³ Connell p.295.

⁴ Weitzmann p.78; cf. *Le Monde* 19/2/85 p.1.

⁵ Clark: *Constitutional Dynamic...* p.6; *Le Monde* 9/7/87 p.6.

⁶ Connell p.353.

⁷ Ibid. p.354.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Op. cit. *Le Monde* 9/7/87 p.6.

¹⁰ Guiart p.130, pp.252-253.

For Claude Sarran in February 1985, the reason why right-wing terrorism was not widespread in New Caledonia was the smallness of the Territory's population: "Ici, tout le monde se connaît et tout se sait. C'est pour cela que le terrorisme est faible pour l'instant."¹ According to Sarran it is difficult to conceal covert activities in such a small community. Guiart claims that the failure of Caldoche, métro and pied-noir right-wing activists to mobilise Nouméan support has been because Nouméa's inhabitants prefer to support French loyalism passively rather than through violent action.² Recent political developments support this claim. Following the RPCR's 1988 signature of the Matignon Accords, and despite extremist denunciations from the FN(NC) and FC, there has been no lasting resurgence of these political parties of the extreme right, and certainly no return of groups like CACI, FCL, or CAP. Mainstream loyalist support has instead been offered to the RPCR with its goals of peace and development alongside the FLNKS. At the end of the 1980s, the appeal to loyalists of violent extremist solutions is much less than it was in 1985.

The RPCR's own flirtation with the methods of the extreme right in the mid-1980s bears more political significance than small groups like the FCL. Amongst the RPCR's leaders then, Roger Laroque was not averse to the use of illegal force to support French loyalism. On 22 July 1982, he publicly thanked the approximately thirty³ young MOP members who burst in to the Territorial Assembly Chambers and shouted at FI and FNSC representatives present to resign.⁴ Laroque was also an advocate of armed militias until his death in 1985.⁵ Nor is Jacques Lafleur, the signatory to the 1988 Matignon Accords and the tamer of right-wing extremism, entirely without links to the tentation ultra. In May 1985 Lafleur, along with Laroque, joined in with a loyalist mob of several thousand who pursued 200 FLNKS demonstrators into the Vallée du Tir and surrounded the FLNKS offices there. One Kanak, Celestin Zanglo, was killed in the confrontation and others were injured.⁶ Lafleur, whilst denying responsibility for organising any broussard militias in 1984, admitted that he did supply them with helicopter transport at his own personal expense: "Les milices, ce n'est pas moi. Ce sont des gens qui se sont organisés spontanément pour se défendre. Moi, je me suis limité à leur fournir des moyens de transport."⁷

But the most important indicator of the RPCR's extremist tendencies in the mid-1980s was its own "security force". In 1985, the RPCR appointed Henri Morini as its security head. He proceeded to organise a private force for the RPCR, the security wing of which was comprised largely of Wallisians. The force's training grounds were in the Nouméan suburb of Pont-des-Français.⁸ Morini and his principal subordinates shortly fell out with the law. In June 1985 Morini was arrested for burgling the home of Maurice Lenormand, the former UC leader.⁹ Serge Vanhalle, appointed leader of the force's Nouméan militia, was sentenced to two years imprisonment in 1985 for the possession of explosives.¹⁰ Bernard Deck's arrest in January 1986 however was the most revealing of all. Deck was Vanhalle's second-in-command and upon his arrest documents concerning a paramilitary operation were found. Included were three unit lists for an "Equipe choc", "Equipe no.1" and "Equipe no.2", a training programme, a

¹ *Le Monde* 19/2/85 p.1.

² Guiart p.299.

³ Connell numbered the group at approximately sixty. See Connell pp.300-301.

⁴ Weitzmann p.82.

⁵ Connell p.368.

⁶ *Ibid.* p.352.

⁷ *Le Point* 19/12/88 pp.83,84.

⁸ Connell p.353; *Le Monde* 9/7/87 p.6

⁹ Connell p.354.

¹⁰ *Le Monde* 9/7/86 p.6.

list of uniform requirements for the formation, and an assault plan of the cité Lenquette¹ with a "hit" list of FLNKS supporters living there.²

The RPCR maintained Morini as its security head into the period of the Matignon Accords despite these disclosures concerning his associates. The RPCR did not take active steps to dissassociate itself from these incidents. As mentioned earlier, Vanhalle was a beneficiary of ADRAF's generosity in 1987 following his release from prison.* Individuals like Morini arguably have less weight within the RPCR in 1989 than they did in 1985, but their continued presence suggests that, contrary to his claims, Lafleur has not yet completely "écarté les extrémistes"[†] from his own ranks, if indeed he desires to do so.

¹ A Melanesian-inhabited housing estate on the edge of Nouméa.

² Le Monde 11/1/86 p.6.

* See above p.36.

† See above p.43.

Conclusion: on the nature of "Caldochie"

This essay has offered an overview of the diverse social, ethnic and political groupings within the French loyalist community in New Caledonia. The centrality of the Caldoches to this broad community has been discussed along with their sense of identity. This conclusion will remark generally on the validity of ascribing to New Caledonian loyalists a distinct collective identity under the title "Caldochie".

"Caldochie" is a useful term for describing the loyalist community within New Caledonia but it is necessary to inquire if the term does have real significance or whether it is merely a piece of facile metropolitan French journalese. Like the word "Kanaky" in the 1980s, in reaction to which it was coined, "Caldochie" is a hypothetical term. As a sovereign entity it has no status in French constitutional law. Nor is "Caldochie" widely accepted as a valid concept amongst New Caledonia's loyalists. Although loyalists are to be found predominantly in the Southern Province of the Grande Terre and to some extent can be delineated geographically from the indépendantiste-dominated Northern and Loyalty Islands Provinces, partition is not an option generally favoured by New Caledonian loyalists. Loyalists desire that New Caledonia as a whole remains within the French Republic. The PNC, with its 1982 concept of a Rhodesian-style independence for New Caledonia was merely a short-lived minority current of political opinion.

The RPCR has not regarded a partition of New Caledonia along ethnic lines as a positive step. The party opposed Edgard Pisani's January 1985 proposal to deliver control of the Loyalty Islands and the interior of the Grande Terre to the FLNKS while leaving Nouméa under Caldoche control with "free port" status.¹ If New Caledonia is to remain French following the 1998 self-determination referendum, it is the RPCR's wish that the Territory as a whole remain French. A future partition of New Caledonia into Kanaky and "Caldochie" is not an RPCR objective. The FLNKS may desire the creation of an independent Kanaky, but the RPCR does not uphold "Caldochie" as an entity deemed necessary to supercede New Caledonia as an administrative body. "Caldochie" is unlikely to exist as a sovereign entity and it should not be regarded as the expression of Caldoche loyalist aims in the same manner in which Kanaky represents indépendantiste objectives. As a political concept, "Caldochie" has no real currency in loyalist circles.

Just as "Caldochie" does not adequately represent loyalist political goals, so too it fails to adequately represent New Caledonia's loyalists. Clearly derived from "Caldoche", the term "Caldochie" does not reflect the social and ethnic diversity of those who wish to retain links with France. As was mentioned in Chapter One, the Caldoches are just one segment of New Caledonia's loyalist population. Amongst New Caledonia's European inhabitants alone, there are also pieds-noirs and métros to be

¹ See Connell pp.338-339.

considered. Such is the size of the métro population in Nouméa that it might equally be called "zozo-land" with some justification. Then there are New Caledonia's loyalist Melanesians, Wallisians, Futunans, French Polynesians and Asians to be considered. The collective label "Caldochie" hardly does these ethnic groups justice.

The term "Caldochie" then has no real substance in either geographical, political or ethnic terms. It is a clever and sometimes convenient invention, but a superficial and misleading one somewhat out of tune with the era of the Matignon Accords. Jacques Lafleur has led the RPCR to realise that New Caledonia's loyalist majority cannot encourage peace and prosperity in the Territory as long as it ignores the demands of the FLNKS.* The loyalists cannot peacefully exist isolated from those demands. Mutual recognition by both loyalists and indépendantistes has hopefully established conditions under which both of these groups will be able to interact peacefully to determine New Caledonia's future. "Caldochie" cannot exist in isolation. Rather it is becoming part of a wider New Caledonian community.

* See above p.38.

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